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THE CHILD OF GOD.

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Frontispiece.

HOLY BAPTISM.

"Now he is not a servant but a son." (*Galat.* iv. 7.)

THE CHILD OF GOD

OR

What comes of our Baptism.

BY

MOTHER MARY LOYOLA,

OF THE BAR CONVENT, YORK,

Author of "First Communion."

EDITED BY

FATHER THURSTON, S.J.

"*I write unto you, little children . . . I write unto you, babes.*"
(1 John ii. 12, 13)

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GEORGIUS TYRRELL, S.J.

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HERBERTUS CARD. VAUGHAN,

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TO THE SPIRIT

WHO GIVETH TESTIMONY

TO OUR SPIRIT

THAT WE ARE THE SONS OF GOD

BY WHOM WE HAVE RECEIVED

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION OF SONS,

WHEREBY WE CRY,

ABBA! FATHER!

PREFACE.

To those who are familiar with the book published two years ago in the Quarterly Series under the title of *First Communion*, few words will be needed to recommend another work of kindred purport from the pen of the same gifted author. This also is a child's book, and it aims at bringing home to the minds of our little ones a sense of the responsibilities which follow upon the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, even as its predecessor dealt with the dispositions required for the worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. The audience addressed is conceived as slightly more youthful than that contemplated in the former work. For this reason the author has rightly judged that dulness would be even more unpardonable here than before. Stories and illustrations have been multiplied, and variety has been more consistently sought by means of questions and interruptions and snatches of dialogue, such as must naturally ensue when a narrator is chatting pleasantly to an audience of little folks who are both thoroughly interested and thoroughly at their ease.

It is to this freshness of treatment and its patient adaptation to the slow workings of a child's mind that, in the judgment of the present writer, the great value

of Mother Loyola's writings is mainly due. The real core of a child's intelligence and conscience is often singularly impervious even to the talk which interests him. Perhaps it would be truer to say that these two faculties are the last of all to quicken into life. No doubt it is a wise disposition of Providence that the opening bud is so shielded and wrapped round that the rain and sun can penetrate but slowly. But the fact remains that the keenest of little brains have often no conception that there can be more to do during catechism-time than to sit still, to attend and to remember as a parrot remembers. It is hard for children to think at all, and harder still for them to think about themselves. "Being good" in their idea is constantly identified with avoiding scoldings, saying many prayers, burning candles before our Lady's statue, making the Nine Fridays, and other external practices, excellent in themselves no doubt, but giving no guarantee of stability. To know how to take a moral lesson to heart, to keep a watchful eye on failings, to carry out resolutions about the moulding of their own characters—this is what we most want to teach them. But these are things which even many grown-up people have never learnt to do, and which they too often regard as requiring an effort wholly beyond their power.

If, then, we hope to awaken the moral faculties from early years, the task must be set about very deftly and very patiently. All violent methods are out of place. Here, if anywhere, an ounce of showing is worth a pound of telling. This is what the chapters

which follow seem to me to accomplish so successfully. Even if its subject-matter were less important than it is, the book would be valuable to all engaged in moral instruction merely as an example of method. There are many of our children's books in which the value of stories and illustrations is recognized, but in which absolutely no attempt is made to assimilate the materials into a consistent whole. The stories may be good in themselves, and the scraps of instruction may be good in themselves, but they are merely thrown down side by side for the child to pick and choose as fancy may suggest. Thus presented they are as unpalatable as the ingredients of an ill-mixed pudding, and I fear often prove hardly more digestible. It is a part of what seems to me to be Mother Loyola's much more rational method not to be afraid of developing her illustrations. No doubt this requires space and trouble, and it may be thought that it wastes valuable time. Nevertheless, if but one of the lessons in such a book took firm root, no expenditure of energy could ever be deemed excessive. Children require to have comparisons and analogies worked out in detail. A mere allusion is lost upon them. If an impression is to be made they must be interested, though when the mind has once been set working they are often able to continue the process for themselves.

On the other hand, if the author may seem to some rather bold in the choice of topics introduced as figures and examples, it may be said that she is only imitating the practice of our Lord Himself in selecting her illustrations from the things most familiar to those whom

she is addressing. A certain audacity and originality in such matters seems to have been characteristic of Christian writers even from the beginning. The comparison, for instance, between the soul of the baptized child and the infant Moses, so happily worked out in chapter iii., would find abundant justification, if any were needed, in the style of allegory affected by the Fathers of the second century after Christ.[1]

Although it has not been at all the author's intention to make this little book a vehicle for imparting secular information, pains have been taken as far as possible to secure accuracy in statements of fact. The details of railway life in chapters ii. and xi. represent the results of many conversations with an intelligent Catholic porter, now promoted to be a guard, who had become an enthusiastic admirer of *First Communion*, and was eager to place all the information he possessed at the author's disposal for her new book. The thanks of the readers as well as of the writer of the work are certainly due to him for the many interesting pages to which he has thus indirectly contributed. With regard to the other illustrations, it need only be said that in relating the story of Cyrus, some little liberty has been taken with the probable facts of history. The account followed is that of Herodotus, but modern Assyriologists consider that the actual capture of Babylon was effected not by Cyrus in person, but by his lieutenant, Gobrias (Ugbaru).

[1] I am thinking particularly of the epitaph of Abercius, of Hermas, and of the "fish" symbolism to be found in Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria.

In the first chapter, and elsewhere, pains have been taken when the occasion presented itself to use as far as possible the actual words of Holy Scripture. The author seems to be well advised in thinking that too much can hardly be done to inspire our Catholic children with a great reverence and love for the Sacred Text. In Protestant schools, where there is little or no dogmatic teaching, the study of the Bible naturally acquires a greater relative importance. With us time cannot be found for everything, but it becomes the more desirable to take such accidental opportunities as may offer for making God's written Word more familiar, at an age when the memory is plastic and retentive. It is only in deference to the representations made to her that children are likely to be repelled by a profusion of italics, that the author has renounced the idea of emphasizing the quotations from Holy Scripture by a difference in type.

Of the pictures in the present volume, those of Cyrus and St. Louis have been designed expressly for this work by Miss Josephine Padbury, two others are reproduced from paintings by De la Roche, and the frontispiece is a detail from one of the St. Boniface frescoes, by H. Von Hess.

In deference to the strongly expressed wish of Superiors and friends, the author has reluctantly consented to allow her name to appear on the title-page of the present work. One reason for pressing this request upon her may be found in the insinuation which is sometimes made that the educational methods of reli-

gious congregations in general, and of the older Orders in particular, are inadequate and out of date. It is pleasant to be able to point to a book so thoroughly modern in the best sense, and so conspicuously fresh in tone and conception, as a specimen of the intellectual work which is going on in a house which enjoys the proud distinction of being the oldest convent in England. For more than two hundred years, St. Mary's Convent beside Micklegate Bar at York, has occupied the site on which it still stands to-day, and even this was only a branch from the school opened in Hammersmith by the Institute of Mary as early as 1668. It is not unreasonable to believe that the intellectual vitality exemplified in this book augurs well for the prosperity of the new foundation lately begun by the same nuns at Cambridge, the first attempt, I think, made by any English community of religious women to place themselves *en rapport* with the teaching of the older Universities.

Finally I may venture, both in the author's behalf and in my own, to return very hearty thanks to the kind friends who in various ways have assisted in the production, illustration, and correction of the present volume.

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

Quinquagesima Sunday, 1899.

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I.

A NIGHT WITH A KING.

I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine.
(Isaias 45, 4.)

ONE of the most memorable nights in the history of the world was a night in Babylon two thousand four hundred years ago, more than five hundred years before our Lord came.

Suppose we transport ourselves to Babylon as it was on that night, and from the lofty walls look down on the scene around us. At our feet, sleeping in the moonlight, lies the most magnificent city of the world, "the Mistress of the East," "the Lady of Kingdoms," the first among "the stately cities," as Holy Scripture calls it. Its walls are over three hundred feet high, and so broad that six chariots can drive abreast along the top. A hundred gates of brass give entrance to the city, which lies on both sides of the river Euphrates and, with its gardens, orchards, and pleasure-grounds, covers an area of seventy square miles. Look, you can see the gates, twenty-four on each side, glittering like points in the moonlight. The river is crowded with craft of all kinds, bringing to the capital of the empire the

rarest produce of other lands. Those light boats made of willows and hides are laden with skins of palm-wine from Armenia. Others bring the myrrh and frankincense of Arabia, the finest pearls of the Persian Gulf, shawls from Northern India, silks from China. Others again are carrying ivory, ebony, cinnamon, and others spices from the shores of Southern India or Ceylon. "Merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones: and of pearls, and fine linen, and silk, and scarlet, and all manner of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of precious stone, and of brass, and of iron, and of marble. And cinnamon, and odours, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and horses, and slaves, and souls of men."[1]

Between the fifty splendid streets half of which cross the rest at right angles, are six hundred and twenty-five squares laid out in parks and gardens. Here we see gorgeous temples; there palaces, fountains, gigantic statues, obelisks. All is grandeur and luxury. Some of the roofs are of gilded brass, and many of the buildings, as we should see in the daytime, are painted in bright colours. The world boasts of seven wonders, and of these, three are within the walls of Babylon.

That immense building to the north is the Temple of Bel or Belus, the chief god of the Babylonians, who say that it covers the spot where the great Tower of Babel stood. Its eight towers, piled one above the other to the height of five

[1] Apoc. 18.

hundred feet, and within, its golden statues and rich ornaments of every kind make it the most magnificent temple in the world. Here beneath us on the eastern side of the river, where the buildings are most splendid, is the royal palace strongly fortified and covering with its grounds a space of eight square miles.

"And these flowery slopes rising terrace above terrace as high as the city walls, what are they?"

Ah, no wonder your eye is attracted by the hanging gardens. They are the marvel of Babylon, and their fame is world-wide. See! tall trees, rare shrubs from other lands, and the fairest flowers are growing up there. And twice a day all are refreshed with the river water pumped up to that prodigious height, and falling over them in artificial rain.

Babylon is the "city of pleasant palaces." All parts of the empire, from the tablelands of Persia on the east, to the blue Mediterranean on the west—Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Phœnicia, pour their riches into it. Its inhabitants are a highly gifted people, ingenious and refined. But their wealth is their ruin. The arts that make life easy and luxurious have attained such a degree of advancement among them that they spend their lives in idleness and self-indulgence of every kind, without a thought or desire except to enjoy life as much and as long as they can.

Look down upon the city. How the bright moonlight is flooding palace and park and he now silent streets! How distinctly every object stands out in the clear atmosphere of this Eastern land!

How still it is! Who would suppose that just outside, almost within the shadow of those tremendous walls, a besieging army is encamped? Yet so it is. The vast hosts of Kei Khosroo, or Cyrus as we call him, lie around on every side. In the daytime you would see the plain darkened with immense masses of troops, "a mighty multitude of horse, a mighty multitude of archers, and javelin-men, and slingers innumerable." You can count the watch-fires, and even see over there the motionless forms that stand sentry before the royal tent. For Cyrus himself is there, Cyrus, King of Persia, who has sworn to enter proud Babylon as a conqueror, though he should have to wait before her gates for years.

It looks as if he will have to wait. If the cities of Canaan were "walled up to the sky,"[1] as Holy Scripture says, what shall we say of Babylon. The walls are too high to be scaled and too strong to be stormed, and provisions are stored up for twenty years. So the besieged feel quite safe, and from the top of their towers shout down defiant, mocking words upon the immense hosts that cover the plains as far as the eye can reach:

"Is the siege, now in its second year, a whit more advanced than it was the first day? And who does not know that Babylon is prepared for a siege of twenty years! With her walls and her river to protect her, what should she fear! Let the Persian do his worst. Does he think to frighten her by those miserable mole-hills of his?"

[1] Deut. 9.

Cyrus hears the boastful words, and works on and waits. He can afford to wait, for his scheme is going forward grandly. The trust of the Babylonians is in the Euphrates. So is his. He has made an ally of the great river, and if Babylon is to be his prize, it will be the Euphrates that will deliver her into his hands.

Look out yonder. Those "mole-hills" are meant not to frighten but to deceive. Hidden behind them are the huge trenches out of which all that earth has been thrown. At the right moment the waters of the river are to be drawn off into these trenches, that through the dry bed Cyrus may march his men into the very heart of the city. It is a daring and a difficult scheme, but at the cost of immense labour it has been carried through. The vast preparations are now completed, and for weeks the King has only been waiting a fit hour for carrying out his design. That hour the heedless city will provide to-night.

Hark! sounds are rising from the palace just below us. If the rest of Babylon is asleep, there is wakefulness and revelry there. For King Baltassar is making a great feast to-night for a thousand of his nobles, and the music of trumpet, and of flute, together with noisy laughter, floats up from the banqueting-hall.

Let us go down and see the revellers. The palace of fine yellow brick is approached by a long flight of marble steps. At the gateway stand, sculptured in stone, two gigantic winged bulls with human faces and stiffly curled hair and beards.

The brazen gates are left open, no guards seem to be about, and we pass without challenge under the pillared portico, and on, and on, and on, through one stately room after another, till we reach the banqueting-hall, a royal chamber, worthy of the capital of such an empire. Columns of porphyry eighty feet high, surround it on all sides and support a roof of cedar gilt. The walls are panelled with alabaster slabs, finely polished and elaborately carved. The subjects are very various. Here is a battle which as the next slab shows was an Assyrian victory, for prisoners are led chained behind a Babylonian chariot. Here is the siege of a town, and here a lion-hunt. Scenes from the chase come again and again, for the Assyrian kings, like Nimrod of old, are "mighty hunters." They are as proud of their hunting exploits as of their warlike deeds, and in these spirited sculptures intend to perpetuate the memory of them for the benefit of posterity. Many of the slabs are covered with little indentations like arrow-heads, clustered in various ways. This is the cuneiform or wedge-shaped writing of the Assyrians. If we could decipher it we should find the letters make up monumental inscriptions telling of some battle between gods and men, of some victory, or some incident of the chase. The variegated slabs of the pavement are scarcely less beautiful than the sculptured walls. Yet they are only the flooring of this magnificent palace. Look up! The ceiling is carved cedar, vermilioned and gilt. From that gallery came the sound of trumpet and flute,

and harp and psaltery, that we heard awhile ago.

Look around! Tables of costly material and elegant form, couches of setim-wood covered with richly embroidered cushions, hangings of silk, brilliant carpets; here alabaster reflected in silver, there ivory overlaid with pure gold—what a scene of gorgeous splendour it is!

See how grace and luxury are studied in every detail. The wine sparkles in goblets fretted with gems; the choice fruits are set out with exquisite taste in vessels of silver and gold; and flowers drooping with the weight of their blossoms fill the tall porcelain vases. Overhead a hundred lamps of silver shed a softened light upon the scene.

Those black slaves with the thick lips and woolly hair are from Ethiopia. Their business is to fan and wait upon the guests, to offer them perfumed water for their hands, and the delicacies of every kind that are provided. See the guests—a thousand nobles clad in every variety of rich and costly attire. Listen to their words: "The time of our life is short. . . . Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present. . . . Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments. . . . Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered.[1] . . . Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."[2] Hear the uproar as they raise the brimming cups and mockingly drink to the success of the Persian arms. Why, the sound must be heard far beyond

[1] Wisdom 2. [2] Isaias 22.

the precincts of the palace, beyond the walls, right into the enemy's camp.

Over there, where the revel is loudest, in the midst of a glittering ring of nobles, is King Baltassar. The raised dais on which his couch is placed is of porphyry, bearing so high a polish that it reflects every movement of the two splendid hunting dogs, gifts of an Indian prince, that lie stretched at their master's feet. Embroidered in silk and gold on the rich canopy overhead we see the curious winged circle with a bird's tail, the emblem of Asser. Near the royal couch are placed the King's bow and quiver. The steward of the palace and the chief cup-bearer stand to the right. Numerous attendants plying the fly-flappers are behind, and beyond them again are ranged the timbrel-players and the dancers.

Look at the King. It needs no second glance to show that he is master of all Assyria can boast. Only the skilled fingers of Babylon could have worked that tassel-fringed tunic of purple and white and the silken mantle on which the winged lion embroidered in gold shimmers in every fold. This double-mantle, with the points thrown over the shoulders, is a dress reserved for royalty. He wears long ear-rings and bracelets of massive gold. The tiara on his head is enriched with a royal diadem, and even to the lappets is ablaze with jewels. See how his sword-hilt sparkles, and well it may, it is encrusted with diamonds.

Would you say King Baltassar had anything to desire, anything to fear? Does he seem prosperous

and happy, one to be honoured and admired? Hear him saying to himself: *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer.*[1]

And hear the answer of the Holy Ghost: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

The goblet at his side has been filled and refilled. Suddenly, in the heat of his wine and the pride of his sinful heart, a wicked fancy strikes him. Has he not heard that the Jews have certain vessels brought from their Temple in Jerusalem when Nabuchodonosor destroyed their city, and that these vessels are deemed holy by the captive people? He beckons to his cup-bearer. The youth leaves the hall on a secret errand. And presently there come, borne into that scene of uproarious mirth, "the vessels of gold and silver which Nabuchodonosor, his father, had brought away out of the Temple that was in Jerusalem, that the King and his nobles and his wives might drink wine in them."[2] With blasphemy and laughter the revellers raise the sacred vessels to their lips and praise "their gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood, and of stone"

What ails the King? He has broken off suddenly in the midst of his mirth. His eyes are fixed upon the western wall, and he grows ghastly pale. The guests follow his gaze, and a death-like silence falls upon them.

[1] St. Luke 12. [2] Daniel 5.

A hand is gliding over the surface of the wall—a hand only—no arm, no body—and it is writing mysterious words. The revellers rise from their seats, and, huddled together, watch it in speechless terror. There can be no illusion—a myriad lights fall full upon it. All see it—see the fingers as they move along. The King can see the joints of the hand that writes. "His countenance is changed; his thoughts trouble him, his knees strike one against the other. He cries out to his attendants to bring in the wise men, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers," to explain the mystic signs. And he says to them: "Whosoever shall read this writing and shall make known to me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and shall have a golden chain on his neck, and shall be the third man in my kingdom. Then come in all the King's wise men, but they can neither read the writing, nor declare the interpretation to the King. And King Baltassar is much troubled; and his countenance is changed, and his nobles also are troubled."

Amid the general terror and confusion some one thinks of the Queen-mother, whose counsel the King is wont to seek in urgent need. A whispered word to him, and he sends for her in haste. Look at her as she passes undismayed through the courtiers, who fall back to give her place, and in quiet dignity stands before her son:

"O King live for ever! Let not thy thoughts trouble thee; neither let thy countenance be changed. There is a man in thy kingdom that hath the spirit of the holy gods in him; for King Nabuchodonosor,

thy father, appointed him prince of the wise men, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers—thy father, I say, O King. Because a greater spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, and interpretation of dreams, and showing of secrets, and resolving of difficult things were found in him, that is in Daniel. . . . Now, therefore, let Daniel be called for, and he will tell the interpretation."

See all eyes fixed on the flying feet of the messenger. See the fever of expectation with which they watch the doorway. And now Daniel the Prophet appears and is brought in before the King. And the King says to him:

"Art thou Daniel of the children of the captivity of Juda, whom my father the King brought out of Judea? I have heard of thee, that thou hast the spirit of the gods; and excellent knowledge and understanding and wisdom are found in thee. And now the wise men, the magicians, have come in before me to read this writing and show me the interpretation thereof, and they could not declare to me the meaning of this writing. But I have heard of thee that thou canst interpret obscure things, and resolve difficult things. Now if thou art able to read the writing and to show me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck; and shalt be the third prince in my kingdom."

And Daniel says: "Thy rewards be to thyself, and the gifts of thy house give to another: but the writing I will read to thee, O King, and show thee the interpretation thereof.

"O King, the most High God gave to Nabuchodonosor, thy father, a kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and honour. And for the greatness that He gave to him, all peoples, tribes, and languages trembled and were afraid of him; whom he would he slew; and whom he would he destroyed; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he brought down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit hardened unto pride, he was put down from the throne of his kingdom, and his glory was taken away. And he was driven out from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts; and his dwelling was with the wild asses; and he did eat grass like an ox; and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the Most High ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He will set over it whomsoever it shall please Him.

"Thou also, his son, O Baltassar, hast not humbled thy heart whereas thou knewest these things. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; and the vessels of His House have been brought before thee; and thou and thy nobles and thy wives have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and of gold, and of brass, of iron, and of wood, and of stone, that neither see, nor hear, nor feel; but the God Who hath thy breath in His Hand, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. Wherefore He hath sent the part of the hand which hath written this that is set down:

"And this is the writing that is written, MANE,

THECEL, PHARES. And this is the interpretation of the word. MANE: God hath numbered thy kingdom and hath finished it. THECEL: Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting. PHARES: Thy kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians."[1]

The Prophet's voice is firm and his tones though low are heard to the remotest corner of the vast hall. His eyes are fixed upon the King whilst he interprets the mysterious words. All eyes but those of the Queen are turned from the supernatural writing to him who is revealing the judgment. No, not all. See over there, withdrawn somewhat into the shadow, that group of Hebrew youths. A look of peace, almost of triumph, lights up their beautiful faces, and we almost catch from their parted lips the Canticle of Moses, the servant of God:

"Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and magnify Thy name! . . . For all nations shall come and shall adore in Thy sight, because Thy judgments are manifest."[2]

Let us leave the palace and look outside the city. The moon is at the full, and we can see almost as well as in the daytime. What a change from the heated atmosphere of the banquet-hall, and the noisy music and feasting! Are we alone then out here? Far from it. See, the plain is dark with

[1] Daniel 5. [2] Apoc. 15.

the immense masses of troops that with bated breath and noiseless footfall, are moving steadily forward towards the river. They are the troops of Cyrus that for two years have kept a patient siege before the city. We follow them to the river-brink, and there, to our amazement, see them disappear. Yes, the bold scheme of the Persian has succeeded. He has waited for this hour, and it has come at last. King Baltassar has provided it to-night. The river has been drained into the trenches, and now, instead of the broad, bright flood that guarded Babylon, there rolls up the dry channel a stream of armed men panting for plunder. Still the city may be saved if the brazen gates leading from the river to the streets are shut. Shut they always are at night. But this night, through some amazing negligence, they are left open. The soldiers rush up through the empty streets and make at once for the palace. They surprise the guards and cut them to pieces. And now the alarm is given, and the noise of the attack reaches the revellers, who have returned to their feasting and continue their sacrilegious mirth beneath the very wall where the words of warning stand.

Hark! what was that? A shout in the distance and a cry. There it is again, and louder and nearer. Startled once more, they turn to the windows and listen. A messenger bursts into the hall. "The Persians in the palace! Flee, flee, O King!" See the terror and confusion on every side—no time for arming or defence, the enemy is upon them.

Another shout, and another, and another, mingled

now with the shrieks of women. There is a rush for the doors, but the way is blocked by the struggling, panting mass. And still, louder and louder every moment, grows the din without, and nearer and nearer come those fearful shouts. A sudden cry from the front—and the whole mass is borne back again into the banquet-hall. The Persian war-cry sounds in the palace, the hall is reached and in another instant is a slaughter-house.

"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, . . . her sins have reached unto heaven, and the Lord hath remembered her iniquities. . . . Because she saith in her heart: I sit a queen and am no widow, and sorrow I shall not see. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning and famine. . . . Alas! alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the voice of harpers and of musicians, and of them that played on the pipe and on the trumpet, shall no more be heard at all in thee; and no craftsman of any art whatsoever shall be found any more at all in thee: and the sound of the mill shall be heard no more at all in thee. And the light of the lamp shall shine no more at all in thee: and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, for all nations have been deceived by thy enchantments."[1]

[1] Apoc. 18.

"*In one hour is thy judgment come.*" The mighty city that we saw an hour ago in the height of its pride, is fallen into the hands of its enemies, who will leave it a desert.

We turn again to the palace. Those fearful sounds have died away; there seems to be silence now. Yes, it is still with the stillness of death. We may pass in unhindered. All up the marble steps lie the dead in their festal robes, slain as they fled—all along the corridors that lead to the banqueting-hall. And there; oh! what a change. Tables and couches overturned, and statues and lamps and vases of bright flowers. Musical instruments flung hither and thither, and in place of music and laughter a silence broken only by the groans of the dying. Awhile ago there was the noisy cheering of the Persian soldiery as they crowded round their leader and hailed him the founder of a new empire.

But now a silence has come over them. He stands in their midst absorbed in his own thoughts, and does not seem to see or hear what passes around. These pensive moods steal upon him from time to time, and there is no rousing him while they last.

Look at him well. Cyrus is no ordinary king. He is one of the most interesting figures in the ancient heathen world, and could we believe his pagan biographer, a perfect prince. But we must remember that to be truly great it is not enough to do grand things or even things that are naturally good. "What a man is in the eyes of God, that he is and no more," says St. Francis of Assisi. God

considers in a man not so much *what* he does as *why* he does it, the intention with which he acts: "*Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.*"[1] What springs from His grace as from its root, what is done to please Him, this is of value in His sight, this will have a reward in Heaven. And nothing else will.

Yet even if the praise given to Cyrus is excessive, we feel that he is one of the best among the poor heathen who know so little of God and how to make life truly great and good. He rules his people well and wisely, as if he knew himself to be accountable to another for the power put into his hands Prosperity does not puff him up. Here to-night, in the first flush of victory, he stands calm amidst the acclamations of his men, and looks with almost a troubled eye on the ruin around him. He sees farther than others see He looks beneath the surface of the things that come and go. He is one of the few that *think in their hearts*. No wonder then that the events of such a night as this are stirring him strangely.

There are points in the world's history at which it seems to halt for a moment to look back. Cyrus feels that one of these landmarks has been reached to-day. An empire of fifteen hundred years has been swept away, and his own will take its place. Is he thinking that his own, too, will pass away, may be amidst such horrors as his hand has brought on Babylon to-night?

[1] 1 Kings 16.

His soldiers can make nothing of these silent broodings of his. They stand about him mute and puzzled, or talk in low whispers over the events of the day.

Meanwhile a stranger has come among them unperceived, and now as Cyrus lifts his eyes, he sees standing before him a man of the Hebrew race. He is tall, grave of countenance, and of such majesty in look and bearing, that all instinctively give place and gaze at him as if he were a messenger from another world. And so indeed he is. For the second time on this memorable night the Prophet Daniel has come into the hall, and he comes as before with a message for a King.

"O King, live for ever!" He takes the conqueror by the hand. He leads him before the western wall on which the wondrous writing stands. He reads the writing. He gives the interpretation. "MANE: *God hath numbered thy kingdom and hath finished it.* THECEL: *Thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting.* PHARES: *Thy kingdom is divided and is given over to the Medes and Persians.*"

But an hour ago the prophecy was written, and lo! its fulfilment has come, and he who stands there is the chosen instrument in the Hand of God for the fulfilment.

Cyrus listens, bewildered, awestruck. He looks at the writing, he looks at the Prophet of God with the simple unquestioning faith of a child. His soul is stirred to its depths. The soldiers stand round and listen; the solemn influence of that hour and of the message from another world is upon them all.

And now Daniel rouses the King from the thoughts that are overpowering him, and beckoning with his hand leads the way from the hall. Three officers, the confidential advisers of Cyrus, venture to attend him. Clanking armour resounds through the corridors as the four follow their guide now to the right, now to the left, on and on through interminable passages, till in a secluded quarter of the palace they are suddenly brought to a halt before a curtained doorway. The five pass within and find themselves in a small chamber, poor and unfurnished except for the pallet in the corner, a table, and a chair. Stay, there is something dimly visible behind the oil lamp that burns in that recess. It is a chest of curious workmanship. Daniel goes to it straight, opens it with reverent hands, takes out a roll of parchment discoloured by time. He unfolds it, and his eye runs down the lines. Now he lays the scroll on the table, places the lamp where the light falls upon it, and drawing the King to his side points to a passage and reads:

"Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed. . . . The Lord has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes and His mind is against Babylon to destroy it. . . . The fords are taken, . . . that broad wall of Babylon shall be utterly broken down and her high gates shall be burnt with fire."[1]

The Prophet stops. The silence of the room is intense. The soldiers hold their breath. By the light of the lamp we see that the King's face is ashy pale.

[1] Jerem. 51.

"When and by whom was that Scripture written?" he asks. Daniel tells him that the roll was written seventy years ago by Jeremias, the Prophet of God, in the days when Juda was led captive into Babylon by Nabuchodonosor the King. Seventy years ago! long, therefore, before the birth of Cyrus. The men look at one another, but no one speaks.

There is another roll in the Prophet's hand. He opens and lays it down. See the agitation of the King as he follows the finger moving beneath the lines, and listens: "Behold I will stir up the Medes against them. . . . And that Babylon, glorious among kingdoms, the famous pride of the Chaldeans, . . . shall no more be inhabited for ever, . . . wild beasts shall rest there, and their houses shall be filled with serpents, and ostriches shall dwell there and the hairy ones shall dance there. And owls shall answer one another there in the houses thereof, and in the temples of pleasure."[1]

The Prophet is turning the roll backwards, and now he points again: "I am the Lord that make all things, . . . and there is none with Me, . . . Who say to the deep, . . . I will dry up thy rivers: Who say to Cyrus: Thou art My shepherd and thou shalt perform all My pleasure. . . . Thus saith the Lord to My anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of to subdue nations before his face and to turn the backs of kings, and to open the door before him, and the gates shall not be shut.

[1] Isaias 13.

I will go before thee and will humble the great ones of the earth. And I will give thee hidden treasures and the concealed riches of secret places that thou mayest know that I am the Lord Who call thee by thy name. I have made a likeness of thee, and thou hast not known Me. . . I girded thee and thou hast not known Me. . . Be converted to Me and you shall be saved "[1]

The King's emotion is mastering him. With a strong effort he asks:

"And this other Scripture, what may its age be?"

Daniel tells him that these are words of Isaias the Prophet, who lived some two hundred years ago in the land of Juda. He spoke in the name of the Lord that made all things, "the King of Ages, immortal and invisible,"[2] God beside Whom there is no other.

Known by name two hundred years before his birth! All about him, everything that was to happen to him—known. Every detail of that night—the dried up river, the unguarded gates, the overthrow of the empire—distinctly seen! And seen by One Who not only knew but cared for him, made plans for him, chose him as an instrument, took him by the hand, spoke of him almost with reverence—*Cyrus, My shepherd.*[3] . . . *My anointed Cyrus.*[4] Who could this be but the Everlasting God!

God! Till then the name has been nothing to

[1] Isaias 45.
[2] 1 Timothy 1. [3] Isaias 44. [4] Isaias 45.

him but a name. His gods, if they exist at all, never concern themselves about him, that he is sure of. And here is the True and Living God treating him as a trusty servant, as a friend! A new idea of his greatness breaks in upon the mind of Cyrus. He has been fully alive to his own importance in the eyes of men. But he is greater far than he suspected. He is important in the eyes of the King of kings, a thing of worth to the God Who made him. How paltry his earthly titles seem to him now in the light of his new glory. To be King, conqueror, overthrower of one empire and founder of another—what is this compared with the dignity of being the servant of such a Lord, entrusted with a work to do *for Him!* His ambition is satisfied at last. The secret desire of his heart to love and be loved by One supremely worthy of love, is satisfied. He hides his face in his hands, and for the first time the soul of the poor heathen prince casts itself down in an act of adoration, simple, unshaped, but understood by Him Who made the soul of Cyrus for Himself.

Listen! Without there is the din of arms, the noise of men's feet hurrying to and fro, the voice of captains, the shrieks of women—uproar and confusion through the length and breadth of Babylon, for an empire is changing hands. Within the silent room all is hushed and still; the conqueror of many nations has been brought into captivity, *the heart of the King is in the Hand of the Lord.*[1]

[1] Prov. 21.



CYRUS.

To face p. 22.

II.

A QUARTER OF AN HOUR WITH MYSELF.

Why stand you here . . . idle? (St. Matt. 20, 6.)

Is the story of Cyrus interesting?

"Oh, yes, how could we help being interested in him, when God thought of him and planned for him like that. I should like to know what became of him after that night. Did he do what God told him? And did he keep good to the very end? And was he saved?"

We may hope so, for on the inspired roll was written: "*He shall perform all My pleasure.*"[1] And in the book of Esdras we find that "in the first year of Cyrus, King of the Persians, . . . the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, saying: Thus saith Cyrus, King of the Persians: the Lord the God of Heaven hath given to me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem. . . . Build the house of the Lord the God of Israel, He is the God that is in Jerusalem. . . . And let all help

[1] Isaias 44.

. . And King Cyrus brought forth the vessels of the temple of the Lord, which Nabuchodonosor had taken from Jerusalem, five thousand four hundred."[1]

We may well believe then that the loving words: "*Be converted unto Me and you shall be saved*,"[2] were not spoken in vain—that he turned with all his heart to the God Who was in Jerusalem, and *performed all His pleasure*, and was *converted and saved*.

But now see what follows from this story. If we are interested in the Persian Cyrus who lived so long ago, and so far away, we are bound to be interested in another Cyrus nearer home. No, we need not look about for him, he is close at hand. I turn the search-light round and it falls *on my own soul*. Yes, if it is God's love for him that makes that poor pagan prince interesting, then *I* must be interesting too. I too have been cared for from eternity, by the God Who made me; I too am precious in His sight. I have not seen my name written on a roll years before I was born, but I have seen our Lord hanging for me on the Cross, and heard Him saying: "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*.[3] *I have written thee in My hands*.[4] *I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine*."[5] What I am worth to the God Who made me, has been brought home to me as it was never brought home to Cyrus. Yet am I interested, really interested in my own immortal soul?

[1] 1 Esdras 1. [2] Isaias 45.
[3] Jerem. 31. [4] Isaias 49. [5] Isaias 43.

That sacred roll taught Cyrus two great lessons. It taught him that he was a creature, and therefore very dear to his Creator And it taught him that as a creature he was bound to serve his Creator by doing His Will. Yes, *to serve.* If he was a king and lord over many, he was also a *servant,* sent into this world not to be praised and reverenced and served by his fellow-servants, but that he himself might praise and reverence and serve the King of kings, his Creator and Lord.

And I am sent into this world for the very same end, to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him. Have I ever thought quite seriously about this? Have I ever given five minutes to the thought: *Why was I sent into this world?* And I have been here—how many years?

Had I stood where Cyrus stood that night I should have felt what he felt. I do stand there. I am standing *now* face to face with the great God, Who has had me in His mind always—all through the long eternity when there was no world at all, when there were no Angels round His throne; when He lived in perfect happiness quite by Himself. He thought of me then. He loved me then. He determined to make me, and send me into the world. Why? Because I should be useful to Him? He has millions and millions of mighty Angels to do His bidding, and a multitude of saints that no man can number. He has no need of me.

Why then did God make me? Because He loved me, and wanted to have me with Him in Heaven. He knew I should enjoy Heaven so

much. He knew that the sight of His Beauty and His Glory would make me happy with a happiness such as I have never dreamed of, and He wanted to see the delight on my face throughout eternity.

And so He made me. But it is a rule with Him, that all who are to be happy with Him in Heaven are to have this happiness by way of reward. They are to earn it by using well a wonderful gift He has given them called free-will. We sometimes hear people say they do not like machine-work. Neither does God. He will not accept a forced service. He will not have us brought to Him in Heaven, and set around His Throne like the flowers we put before the Tabernacle. What He loves is the willing, joyous service of His free creatures, who have chosen Him and the happiness for which He made them. All are to be put on their trial. They are to know Him, love Him, and serve Him for a little while by their own free-will and choice, and so deserve to know Him perfectly, love Him perfectly, and serve Him with the delighted service that goes on for ever around His Throne. This is the end for which He made me. This is what is meant by saving my soul.

Whilst I was a baby I could not of course understand this, but I am not a baby now, nothing offends me more than to be treated as if I were. It is time then that I began to look around me and see where I stand, and where I am going, and what I am about.

Where do I stand? In God's world with His

things all around me to use in such a way as to help me to serve Him. Where am I going? Back to Him fast. What am I doing? My conscience must answer that. Do I remember that I am not my own, but His Who made me—that I cannot do as I like, because *I am a servant*?

Once upon a time a nobleman was sent by his sovereign on an embassy to a distant country. The business entrusted to him was one of the highest importance, but he had full instructions concerning it, and was liberally supplied with all he needed to bring it to a successful termination. A large number of servants were placed at his disposal, and in any emergency he had only to signify his need to the King, and help was despatched to him at once. His life was not all work and no play, for he had a good master. The King was generous to him in every way, and not only promised him a high place at Court on his return, and honour and riches, if he had done his duty, but allowed him to enjoy himself during his stay in the foreign country, provided he kept steadily before him that he was there *on business*, and set that business before everything else. To make him bear this in mind always, the King did not tell him how long he was to be left in this foreign country. On the contrary, he was told that when he least expected it he would be called away to give an account of his charge.

Now, how do you suppose the ambassador acted on reaching the place where his work lay? Well,

you would never suppose it, so I must tell you. He set to work indeed and was as busy as possible. But doing what? Making himself comfortable, settling down as if he were to stay there always, spending all his time in amusement, and all the King's money on his own enjoyment. People looked on in amazement. Was he not an ambassador sent on most important affairs that concerned the King's honour and the happiness of many of his fellow-subjects! He was warned by those about him. All to no purpose—there was plenty of time, he said. Why should he not enjoy himself, he could not be always thinking of his work.

Time went on and the King's business was neglected more and more. One night, as this unfaithful servant was setting out for an entertainment, he was told that some one waited for him at the gate. It was a swift messenger from the King, come to recall him and conduct him at once into the royal presence. Imagine his dismay. He was not ready, his work was not done, his accounts were not in order, he did not think he would be called for so soon. Too late. Too late now, his knowledge of what he ought to have done. In vain he begged for a little more time to put things straight—to get ready something at least to show the King. He had been warned again and again, he had had his chance, he must start with the messenger at once. And so, terrified and trembling, he passed out into the dark—to give his account.

"That is a dreadful story, but I am sure it isn't

true, because no one would be so silly, you know, when *he knew* what he had to do, and *knew* the King might send for him at any time."

I wish I could tell you it was not true. But it is happening every day to men and women and children. For *we* are ambassadors of the King, every one of us, sent into this world *on business*. God has given me myself—this wonderful body and still more wonderful soul, and sent me here to do a work for Him. He might have given it to any one else to do, just as the King might have chosen another ambassador. But He wants to give this splendid chance *to me*. And as He has chosen me, He has given me all I need to do it well. He did not make my soul anyhow, merely as one in a hundred million; to know Him, and love Him, and serve Him, just like every other soul; to go through this world anyhow, and to make its way to Heaven as well as it can by itself. But He made it very carefully as if it were the only one He had ever made. In His eyes it is one quite by itself, from which He expects a particular work that He is not going to ask of any one else. So He said to Himself. "I must see that it has all it will need. It must have these talents and these dispositions, these parents and brothers and sisters, and this home. I will give it these pleasures, and I shall be obliged to send it these troubles. But I will be close by it always, and never let any trouble be too hard for it. Nothing will happen to it by chance. It shall have the name of doing My work, but almost all I shall do Myself. And when

the time is come, I will call it Home, and have such a reward ready for it!"

What the distinct work is that God wants of me I do not know yet. But this I know, that I must get on with my business now, by learning to know Him, love Him, and serve Him, by being in earnest about saving my soul. If I am not in earnest now, if I idle away time now, I shall most likely do so all my life. God has not given me any time to waste. He will call me to Himself presently to examine my work. When, I do not know, but whether my life is long or short it will be *soon*. Soon I shall be kneeling at His feet, holding up my work, saying to Him—Lord, are You satisfied?

What a shame it is, that whilst You care so much for me, my God, I care so little for myself! Dogs, birds, books, tennis, bicycles, cricket, all kinds of things, interest me. But my own soul, it does not seem to interest me somehow. Please put this right for me. You can and You will.

Cyrus, I notice, was prompt and eager: "In the first year of Cyrus, the King of the Persians, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus." And at once the proclamation went forth: "Build the house of the Lord . . . and let all help." Stir up my spirit; make me prompt and eager. Show me what You want me to do, and then *let all help*—body and soul, heart, and will, and mind, and strength, that I may be a good and faithful servant, that I may perform *all Your pleasure.*

* * * * *

Now for a tremendous leap! a leap from east to west, from the silent room in Babylon, where we stood awhile ago, seeing Daniel unfold his sacred scroll, to one of the busiest spots in the world to-day. It is close to London, the modern Babylon, and busy as the great city whose roar it catches.

What an interesting place a railway-station is! Which of us does not enjoy standing on a crowded platform and watching the stirring life in the scene around us!

We may do so now, for this is Willesden Junction, about five miles out of Euston, and one of the most important railway centres in the country. Let us pass from one to another of its four platforms and look about us. What a change in the place since the days when England was Catholic, and pilgrims wended their way hither to visit the ancient shrine of "Our Ladye of Wilsdon' in the forest! What a change since the days of our great-grandfathers, when the district was famous for its highwaymen, and the lonely traveller was startled by the summons: "Your money or your life!" Instead of quiet pilgrims to a forest-shrine, we see hurrying passengers bound for every part of the kingdom and out of it, for the saying is from Willesden you can get anywhere. Instead of the rustling of leaves or the dreaded voice of the robber, we hear the cry: "Change here for Broad Street and Kensington! All tickets ready, please!"

Four Companies run their trains through the Junction, seven hundred and six passing through in the twenty-four hours, or about one every two

minutes. Stand back!—That was the Irish mail went rushing past us. Over there a City train is setting down its load. Whilst we are in our beds to-night the "Scotch Mail" will be flying through on its way to Euston, followed by the Liverpool "Sleeping Saloon Express." At 5.15 begins the rush of the down trains—"the Newspaper Express," the "American Special," the "Liverpool and Manchester Dining Saloon Express." And so they go on all through the day. At 10.15, when we are in bed again, there will be the "Irish Night Express," and then the "Edinburgh and Glasgow Sleeping Saloon Express." Foremost even among crack trains is that "American Special" of the London and North-Western Railway, which twice a week runs without a stop from Euston to Liverpool. You go 'on board" at 12.30, and after a journey of a hundred and ninety-three miles, during which two dinners have been served, arrive at Riverside Station, at the mouth of the Mersey, at 4.30, step straight from the train on to the landing-stage, alongside of which lies one of the White Star steamers or a Cunard liner, and punctually at 5 glide from the landing-stage and leave the shores of old England behind you.

O great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers of ours, what would you think of these times in which we live! What would you say to our vestibuled and corridor trains, with their breakfast, dining, and drawing-rooms, with their sleeping-cars and nursery-cars, their kitchen and post-office, nay, if we look at the French President's train, with bath-

room and study! What to the Khedive's elegant little English engine, running through the streets of Alexandria, His Highness himself on the foot-plate driving!

But to return to Willesden.

See the bustle and excitement on every side—here a guard waving his green flag to a starting train, there the porters drawn up in line to receive the train just due, shunters shouting directions to drivers and signal-men, porters with mountains of baggage rolling their trolleys to and fro, passengers from up-trains and down-trains jostling one another on the swarming platform, each one insisting on his or her luggage being attended to first, coal-trains, cattle-trains, fish-trains, following each other in rapid succession—what a sight it is!

Over one thousand men are constantly at work on the Junction or its premises. You see that stream of workmen moving up to a spot on the right. It is "pay-day," and four hundred firemen, cleaners, repairers, &c., are making their way to the "pay-window" to get their well-earned wages.

If you are asked now, what you think is most interesting in this busy scene, I expect you will all cry out, "The engine!" And perhaps it is. Any way, without the engines this scene would not be. It is the engines that have made Willesden Junction. If they were taken away, carriages, trucks, machinery, tools, men, work, life—all would go with them. One has only to stand on the platform when a train is coming in or running through, to see what an object of absorbing attraction the engine is. People never

seem to tire of watching that magnificent massive shape come gliding round the curve, the safety-valve hissing, the brakes creaking and groaning, the funnel pouring out its wreaths of snowy cloud.

The railway officials, too, are proud of their engines, and speak of them as if they were living things. "Looks well, don't she?" a porter said just now, noting, with a pleased smile, the admiration on our faces.

I wonder if it has ever struck you as you watched the trains flashing past, that they are in many respects like the passengers they carry. No? Then suppose we examine them and see if they have not a certain resemblance to our own very selves.

A train consists of two parts quite distinct, yet made to be united together and to complete one another. There is the engine that leads, on which the whole responsibility of the journey rests, that has pent up within it enormous powers for good or for evil, that we see in such different moods—now expressing itself in short, soft, self-satisfied little puffs, as with a proper sense of its own importance it glides leisurely out of the station amidst the waving of hats, the waving of handkerchiefs, and other farewell attentions—now in wails and shrieks as it is brought to a standstill, instead of being allowed to rush forward like its neighbour the express—here swaying violently this side and that at the risk of upsetting everything and everybody—there bumping impatiently over points that come in its way and check its headlong course—further on

complaining with muffled groans when a stiffish climb lies before it—and filling the air with a prolonged screech when a bit of dark tunnel has to be passed. The engine is like—?

"Us of course."

But which part of us, body or soul?

"Well, both, but the soul most, for if we had no soul we shouldn't go on like that."

Very good. The engine, then, is the soul. Now what about the load it has to drag on, which is helpless of itself, dependent for all its movement on the soul, but oh, such a thankless companion, such a weight to pull along, getting far more than its proper share of attention, getting off the line at times?

"That is the body."

It is. What a comfort to have to deal with people so bright and sharp. Now, as everything depends on the engine, and the train has to follow it for better or for worse, it will be worth our while to see how its safety is cared for, and what precautions are taken against danger and accidents.

We are told that English railroads are the safest in the world, and that a passenger would have to travel incessantly night and day for nine hundred years to have a fair chance of being killed or hurt. How is this, for dangers abound on every side? Yes, but so do precautions. Every contrivance which ingenuity can devise is used to protect the line and lessen the engine's risk. We will look at some of these. Perhaps we may find a few hints for ourselves. The engine, mind, is our soul; we,

of course, are the drivers, and the line is our road to Heaven.

In the first place, station-masters, engine-drivers, firemen, guards and porters, signal-men, "look-out" men, shunters, plate-layers, all who are in any way responsible for the engine, or under whose notice it comes as it whizzes past, have strict directions to see to its safety. But it is on the driver chiefly that its security depends. Perhaps when you have seen him on a summer morning whirling along through a bit of pretty country on a run of a hundred miles, you have thought he has an easy and delightful time of it. How simple his work looks—to ride upon the foot-plate, move a lever now and then, and whistle through the tunnels. Would you suppose that his apprenticeship is a longer one than that required for any other trade? Yet so it is. And he has one line only to learn—his own. An engine-driver's work is to "learn the road" he himself has to travel, and not to trouble himself about other lines.

"But what is there to learn?"

Plenty. Besides the actual working of the train, he has to read off the signals quickly—there are seventeen thousand lighted every night on one line alone. He has to creep round his engine on a little ledge a few inches broad in order to oil some machinery underneath the boiler, the train flying at express speed all the while; he has to keep the whole train in view, often looking back during the journey to see that it is all following safely. In short, he has to be on the alert always. A driver's

motto is, "Watch! Be ready!" Hour after hour he stands at his post, peering through the round window in front of his "cab," to see that the way is safe for his train.

No, an engine-driver's task is not an easy one. It is no light thing to be responsible for the safety of an express passenger-train, driving across the country at dead of night at the rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour, past busy stations and through mazy junctions.

By the way, I am supposing that you are bearing in mind all this time who the driver is. You do not suppose that we are talking about trains simply for the sake of the object lesson. Oh, dear no, we ought to be seeing likenesses everywhere, and putting on caps whenever they fit. The driver who has care of engine and train is myself, who have soul and body given into my charge. Is it my one work to look after them—the soul first as most important? to provide all that is needed? to watch for danger signals? to be on the alert always? Am I as vigilant as the driver?

"May we find out some more likenesses?"

Certainly. You will probably see many that I should miss.

"I think the tunnels will be troubles. They make the line very dark, so that we can't see where we are going. We couldn't see anything at all but for the lamp."

What will the lamp be, do you think, that guides us through the darkness of this world into the brightness of the next?

"It must be faith."

Capital. Can you guess this? It sometimes happens that an imprudent driver sets off at full speed, and puts on so much steam at starting that the fuel fails. So the fire goes out, the steam is off, and the train comes to a standstill.

"Like people who want to do everything at once, and they try very hard when they begin. But they soon get tired, and don't try any more."

What will the terminus be?

"Heaven. And the station just before is Purgatory, where all the trains stop."

Except a few specials that run right through. And now let us follow a train on its way, and see some of the precautions that are taken to ensure its safety.

By the block system the whole line is divided into sections, with a signal-box in each. When an engine-driver arrives at one of these boxes, he cannot pass till by beats of an electric-bell, or strokes on a telegraph-needle, the signalman has inquired of the next box if the line on that section is clear. On receiving the answer, "Line clear," the arms of the semaphore, or signal-arm, which you see stretched out close to stations to block the way, is lowered, and the waiting engine-driver runs his train through. A red flag, or at night a red lamp, means "danger," stop; a green flag, or lamp, "all right." In foggy weather, or during falling snow, when the semaphore cannot be seen at a distance of about a hundred yards, the fog-men have to turn out. One man is placed beyond it, just far enough to keep it

in sight, and whenever it is at "danger," it is his duty to put two fog-signals on the line, ten yards from each other. These fog-signals, or detonators, are thin metal cases about the size of a large watch, and contain a pinch of detonating powder. They are fastened by means of clasps to the top of the rails, and when the heavy wheels of the engine pass over them they explode with a loud noise. You may hear them go off like guns on foggy days. The first explosion outside the "distant" signal means that the driver is to slacken speed, and creep cautiously along towards the "home" signal. If fog-signals explode outside that also, they mean that the home signal is also against the driver, and he must stop dead. An explosion is thus an intimation that a signal is at "danger." It is a matter of the utmost importance that fog-signals should not fail. They are carefully examined before use, and for greater security two are placed on the rails a few yards apart, so that if by any chance the first should fail, there would be a second in reserve.

Backwards and forwards along the line walks the fog-signalman, his signal-lamp trimmed and lighted, and red and green flags in his hand. Backwards and forwards, by day and by night, in the dark and the cold, no matter how wet and weary he may be. Nothing must break his watch, nothing must interfere with that all-important work entrusted to him, guarding the line. If he finds any obstruction on it, he must warn the driver of an approaching train by putting down fog-signals.

The engine itself is provided with all sorts of

contrivances to protect it against danger. Reaching down within two inches of the rails are the "life-guards"—strong iron rods for catching and throwing to one side any obstruction that may chance to be upon them. It carries also a supply of dry sand, which the fireman lets out in jets under the wheels when the rails are slippery.

Now I want to know if any of you think all these precautions absurd—that it is stupid to take such pains to keep the line clear, ridiculous for the engine-driver to be always staring through the "spectacle-glasses," instead of enjoying himself, and quite too silly for anything that the fogmen should turn out and shout "danger!" at the passing train, in case there should be collisions in the dark.

Will any of you say that the safety of the train might be left to chance, that things would be sure to come all right in the end? Or will you say that unless people knew all these precautions were taken no one would ever set foot in a train?

Do we not feel the immense importance of every little detail in the line, because of the precious lives that are at stake? And if, in spite of every care, an accident does happen, what a thrill of horror runs through the country! What investigations are made as to the cause! Who was to blame? Was there carelessness in any of the officials?

Now, children, let *us* investigate. Are *we* to blame? Is there carelessness on *our* line? Are we taking pains "to learn the road" on which we have to travel, our own line, mind, not another Com-

pany's, or do we run on heedlessly, never noticing the danger-signals, never looking back to see how we are getting on, coming into collision again and again with other passenger-trains, and harming them as well as ourselves? An accident on the railway is a terrible thing, and any one who is to blame deserves to be severely punished. But if all the trains running to-night were to be dashed to atoms, and all the lives entrusted to them lost, this would be a less evil by far than that the soul of one little child should fail to reach its journey's end in safety.

> Rather let empires crash than one soul fail
> Whose destiny is bliss;
> Sooner let myriad suns and stars grow pale
> Than Heaven one spirit miss.[1]

Certainly. What will last for ever is of more account than what will pass away and perish. Take the scales of the sanctuary in which God weighs the worth of things. Crowd into one all that is great and glorious, but perishable, in this grand creation; in the other place one human soul, *your own*. And see! like a feather they have gone up, all those things of time—that soul of yours outweighs them all.

O my immortal soul, how much it is worth in the eyes of Him Who made it! I look at the crib and the Cross, and I see what He thinks of it. I look at a waiting throne in Heaven, and I see what He thinks of it. Why then do I make so little account

[1] Mother Francis Raphael (Drane).

of my soul, why do I find the care of it such dry, uninteresting work? Because, perhaps, I know so little about it. No one can be interested deeply in what he knows very imperfectly. I must try to get interested by learning more about it, what it is, Whose it is, where it is going, what it must do to get safely to its journey's end.

God's world is a world of beauty. The midnight skies, the solemn mountains, the rushing streams are full of a charm that are ever new for those who have eyes to see. But some people have not eyes to see. They look so carelessly, that it is without seeing. They ask no questions, and take no trouble to learn anything about the beautiful things that surround them on every side. The quivering path of light across the sea at sunrise, and the splash of the gulls at their morning bath; quiet fields where buttercups and clover wave in the meadow-grass; lanes white with hawthorn, hairy mosses, shaggy heather—these things do not interest them. Why? Because they have never turned their minds to look at the beauty of which these sights are full to overflowing.

So it is with those other sights that our eyes cannot see as yet, with our soul first of all. If we never think of it, never care to know anything about it, of course we cannot feel any lively interest in it. It would be a miracle if we did. And yet we *must* be interested in it, for we have to save it.

What then shall we do? Suppose we study it a little—no, that sounds dry—suppose we have some

talks about it, with plenty of stories to help us, and see how we get on. If, at the end of our talks, we have done one thing—just one—got thoroughly interested in our own souls, we may congratulate ourselves heartily, we shall have done well indeed.

III.

THE ROYAL CHILD.

I must be about My Father's business.
(St. Luke 2, 49.)

Do you remember how fond we used to be once upon a time, of "pretending"?—pretending to be father or mother, the postman, the doctor, a shopkeeper selling things, an engine-driver, or a policeman, or a soldier, or the people we read about in stories? Some of us liked to be fairies, or ghosts, or robbers; others to be priests or nuns; and some were never happy unless they were kings or queens.

But our masters and mistresses—these were the people we envied most. Nothing was so delightful as to step into their place and play at "school." After being kept in order ourselves hour after hour and day after day, it was so refreshing to lay down the law in our turn and find fault and punish.

What was it made us so fond of pretending? Was it because we were tired of being called "the children," and wanted to be important, like grown-up people?—to have the charge of letters, like the postman, or of a patient, like the doctor or nurse or, better still, of a set of unruly scamps who have

to be constantly scolded and kept in order? I suspect it was this with most of us. What we liked was the feeling of *being responsible*, that is, of being trusted with something of consequence, having power over it, having to give an account of it. And *this* was funny about us—that the more troublesome the charge was, the better we liked it.

Now suppose for a moment we really had a big trust put into our hands—say the entire charge of a child, and that not an ordinary child either, but a prince. How do you think we should feel? Surely there would be importance enough and responsibility enough here to satisfy any of us!

What care we should take of this little prince. How we should watch to see that no harm came to him. He would be always in our thoughts, and we should scarcely dare to let him out of our sight. What he did and what he said, his lessons and his play, his inclinations, habits, and behaviour to others, the books he read, the friends he made—everything about him, in fact, would interest us deeply. We should always be thinking how these things were telling upon him; whether he was improving or going back; of the account we should have to give of him; what the King would say to this or that; how such and such manners would look at Court; how the boy was fitting himself for his high destiny.

But what if it were to turn out that this was no supposing or pretence at all, but the simple truth, —would that take away all its charm? If this

royal child for whom a glorious future is waiting, were to be no stranger, *but our own soul*, would that make our charge less interesting?

We will think about this a little, and as there is nothing like a story for helping us to think, we will have a story now.

It is a very old one, and you will soon find out whom it is about. But you will be surprised at the end to discover a strong likeness between two people in it, people you do not know, and somebody and something else that you know very well indeed. At *the end*, mind, for it will be too bad if any of you sharp ones make the discovery straight away, and say when the end comes, "Oh, we found that out at the beginning, and we saw the likeness in this and this and this as you went along." And so there will be no surprise after all, and only the very little ones and the dull ones will have to be let into the secret. This would be very provoking, you know. But I don't think even the clever heads will find out everything for themselves. We shall see.

Let us take our stand here on the left bank of the Nile. It is early morning, yet the air is sultry. Scarcely a breath of wind stirs the floating lily, or bows the rushes that stand up straight and tall from the water's edge. Look at the green valley that stretches north and south as far as the eye can reach. Every blade of grass there, every ear of golden corn, is the gift of the great river that is making its way from the heart of Africa to the Mediterranean Sea.

It is the Nile that keeps Egypt alive and prevents the land from being a desert like the dull yellow plain beyond. From June to October, when it overflows its banks, the country is one sparkling sheet of water. Then comes the tender green of the growing crops, and lastly, the golden hue of the harvest. There are four harvests every year, for the mud left by the waters makes the soil very fertile, and as soon as they subside vegetation springs up quickly. When the Israelites have left this land of bondage behind them, they will remember *the cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt.*[1]

See on either bank the band of soft but brilliant green, and beyond—the great sandy waste. So marked is the yellow boundary-line, that you can jump from this green carpet right into the desert. All is dead and dreary there, but everything round the river is teeming with life. The waters are thronged with huge, odd-looking fish; myriads of flies and gnats skim over the surface; on the sand-banks, shelving down to the river, are lizards glancing and wildfowl pluming themselves after their night's rest. In the evening these sandy flats are white, purple, grey, or crimson, from the solid mass of birds that congregate here in millions—herons, cranes, storks, snowy pelicans, the purple geese of the Nile, the zic-zac, or crocodile-bird, the constant attendant on the crocodile, the curious crested hoopoe, and, most brilliant of all, the sacred

[1] Numbers 11.

ibis, a bird like a stork. He has a fine time of it; for these poor Egyptians venerate him during his life, and preserve him as a mummy when he dies. We wonder where such myriads of birds can come from. Some are rovers from Europe and Asia, that wing their flight southward when their summer homes grow dull and chill. Others are natives of Africa that flock to the river-bed in search of food at the season of low Nile, when the other parts of the Soudan are parched with drought.

On a sloping ledge, splashed by the water and half covered with the brightest golden sand, lie three crocodiles basking in the sun. These creatures have their favourite spots, and keep to them. Old men about here could tell us that ever since they were boys these three have made their appearance regularly every morning on this ledge. Monsters as they are, they are sacred, like the ibis, and worshipped as gods in this heathen land.

"How could the Egyptians be so silly as to worship horrid creatures that only ate them up?"

Just *because* it is a pest, the crocodile is worshipped here; the people hope to appease it and make it favourable to them. The more hurtful the reptile or insect, the greater chance it has of being turned into a god by the Egyptians. In some parts of the country tame crocodiles are kept in tanks; they are adorned with golden ear-rings, fed daily, and embalmed when they die.

Birds, beasts, and buzzing insects, what a scene of busy life these Nile-banks show! Overhead we have the indescribable beauty of an Egyptian sky,

so blue that it reflects itself in the fast-flowing waters, charged with earth as they are.

Around us not a sound from anywhere. No one is astir yet, no one except a small figure which long before we came this way had taken up its stand yonder, behind that piece of red rock. It is a Hebrew girl, twelve years old, perhaps. Her dark eyes are fixed upon the spot on the river bank where the bulrushes are thickest, and at the least movement among them she starts as if in fear.

Three months ago a cruel order from King Pharaoh condemned to death all the male children of the Hebrews. They were to be left on these banks, to be drowned in the deep water or eaten by the monsters that bask in the shallows. One poor mother has contrived to hide her child all this time. But now she can hide him no longer, and this morning she has taken "a basket made of bulrushes and daubed with slime and pitch, and put the little babe therein, and laid him in the sedges by the river's brink—his sister standing afar off, and taking notice what would be done."[1]

The sister is to wait and watch. Why, it would be hard to say, unless it is that of all the strong things in this world the strongest is the hope in a mother's heart.

The morning hours go on. It is well that Miriam cannot see how the little ark is sinking down among the sedges. Whenever there is a stir among them, her heart beats fast. Crocodiles, she has been taught, never eat dead things, but they

[1] Exodus 2.

soon find out any living prey. Has one of those monsters seen the basket, and is he crushing through the reeds to seize it?

Were she like the idolaters around her, she would trust to the basket itself for protection. For it is made of the stalks of the papyrus, a plant sacred to the goddess Isis, and supposed to preserve boats made of its stalks from the attacks of crocodiles and other hurtful creatures. But Miriam believes in the one God Who made heaven and earth and all that are in them, and her trust is in Him. A breeze sweeps over the reeds, and as they sway this way and that, a cry for her little brother goes up to Him "Who seeth in secret," a cry to "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers." And a voice speaks to her heart as it will speak to David's later, "*Be still and see that I am God.*"[1]

A party is making its way down to the river. It is Pharaoh's daughter and her maids, and they are coming this way. Nearer and nearer they draw to the bank. Now they are walking along the water's edge. The view from here is beautiful, and the Princess stops to admire it.

Hark! what was that? The cry of a child, surely. She raises her finger for silence, and they all listen. There it is again, but fainter than before. It seemed to come from that black thing like a basket down among the rushes, and she sends one of her maids to fetch it. With some ado, and much screaming from the startled water-fowl, it is reached, dragged up on to the bank, and laid all dripping at

[1] Psalm 46.



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MOSES.

her feet. Her women open it quickly, for they see their royal mistress is full of interest.

Oh, what a lovely little babe! His cheeks are wet with tears, but as soon as he sees the light and the kind faces bending over him, he stretches out his arms and smiles. The Princess' heart is won directly, and she makes her plans. "This is one of the babes of the Hebrews," she says; "I will take it and bring it up for my own."

Whilst her maids look at one another in astonishment, a girl comes forward and asks in trembling tones, "Shall I go and call to thee a Hebrew woman to nurse the babe?" The Princess answers, "Go."[1] Quick as thought the little maid is up the bank and away over the plain at full speed to call her mother.

See the mother going to the spot. How her heart is lifted up to God in thanksgiving; how she fears lest her joy should betray her; lest the little one himself should betray her; lest this wonderful deliverance should be too good to be true. See her falling at the feet of the Princess, and turning her eyes away from the open basket, and from the little face she never thought to see again.

"*Take this child and nurse him for me, I will give thee thy wages.*"

We take what is our own. He is hers and she is to take him—take him from a frightful death and from the jaws of monsters ready to devour him, take him back to her heart and to the love of all who thought him lost to them for ever.

This child—the child of so many tears, of so

[1] Exodus 2.

many tender plans, this child so wonderfully preserved, and privileged, and honoured.

"*And nurse him*, feed him, clothe him, guard him, train him, see that he wants for nothing.

Nurse him *for me*—for, remember that he is mine and that I shall require a strict account of the way in which you treat him. I give him into your care and he will live with you. But he is to be brought up to look upon the palace as his home. He is to be brought up, not as one of a despised race, not as a slave or a servant, but as a prince, destined to take his place at Court when the time has come. Henceforth the King will be his adopted father, he will be a royal child.

I will give thee thy wages. All that the child needs will be provided from the palace. You have only to ask and it shall be sent down at once. And I will pay you well for all your care of him, for whatever he costs you in the way of time or trouble, for any self-denial you may have to practise on his account."

The dear old tale, so like a fairy-tale—how well we all know it! But do any of you see a hidden meaning in this beautiful story?

"Yes, we found it all out as you went on. Moses is our soul. And his mother who took care of him is our own selves. And his sister who hid and watched him is our good Angel."

"And the crocodiles that would have eaten him up if he had not been saved are the devils, only they are in water instead of in fire. And though he

was only a little slave, he was taken into the palace and made the King's son. And God makes us His children, and says we shall be Princes and Princesses and go to Court some day if we bring ourselves up properly. And His Court is Heaven. But Pharaoh and his daughter spoil it all. We don't know who they can be."

Types and figures are never quite like the things they represent. They are something like a bridge of boats when it stretches half-way across a stream and then stops. Pharaoh we do not want, so we will leave him alone. But not his daughter surely, for we want her very much indeed. What! have none of you thought of that second Mother of our soul, who takes it from the waters of Baptism and cares for it as her own, and provides it with all it needs as a Royal Child.

"Oh, the Church, of course, we never thought of her!"

Never mind, you have not done badly. I am glad you noticed that it was a little servant who was made the King's son. We shall want to go back upon that thought presently.

And now suppose we put the words of the King's daughter into the mouth of the King of kings, and listen to Him saying to us, as He trusts our soul to our keeping: "*Take it and nurse it for Me, and I will give thee thy wages.*"

"*Take it,* for it is yours; I give it to you. It is the only thing that is really yours. Everything else is only lent to you, and you will have to give all

back when you come to die. Take it with both hands, hold it fast, for it is very precious. It is your only one. You can never have another. If you lose it, you can never get it back. Take it and guard it so carefully that you can say with David: 'My soul is always in my hands.'

Nurse it; care for it tenderly; see that it wants for nothing. Feed it with instruction, with prayer, with the sacraments. Clothe it with the virtues with which it must appear at My Court—with faith, and hope, and charity; with meekness, humility, obedience. See that its constant companion, the body, does not get the upper hand, is not cruel to it. Remember how Abraham would not have Isaac ill-treated by Ishmael, but turned the strong bully out of doors when he hurt the child who had the promises.

And nurse him *for Me.* Remember always, that your soul *is Mine.* It was Mine first, it is Mine always. You cannot do as you like with it. You know that as the work of My Hands it is Mine, and you know what I have done to keep it Mine. You know Who came to seek it when it was lost; Whose Blood bought it back when it was sold into slavery. 'You are not your own, you are bought with a great price.'[1] You know how My Church and My sacraments and My grace are always ready to help it. And you have to see that all these things do help it. I shall ask a strict account of all you do for and against this soul of yours. You must bring it up, not as *you* like, but as *I*

[1] 1 Cor. 6.

like. You must not say when I want this or that, 'It is too much trouble, I can't attend to all those little things.' You *must* attend to them, for you have a royal child in your keeping, and nothing that concerns it is unimportant."

Jochabed, the mother of Moses, will teach us a lesson here. She could not bring up her boy after her own fashion. He was now the adopted son of the King, and she had to take her orders from the palace. Every now and then the King would send for him to see how the nursing was going on. If he was not satisfied he would say so, and she had to be very careful to attend to what was said lest she should lose her treasure.

"Oh, yes, we know all that of course, but *it is so dry*, and we do get so tired. We are not a bit like Moses' mother after all. For it must have been nice always to take care of him, a dear living baby, but taking care of our souls is such a bother."

Indeed! And who told you, pray, that little Moses was always so nice to deal with? That Egyptian whom he caught quarrelling with the Israelite did not find him what he afterwards became, the meekest of men. No, the probability is that, like some of us, it was one person's work to "mind" him, and that his mother found him at times just what we find ourselves—*a handful*. And it is more than probable that when he was unmanageable he got punished, for his mother seems to have been a sensible woman. So here is a second lesson we can learn from her. She must

have trained him well and persevered in the training, for see what he turned out.

But some people get tired, not after hard work, but before they have done any work at all. So suppose we ask ourselves a question or two about this hard labour for our souls that has quite tired us out.

How does it fare with the Royal Child which the King of kings has entrusted to us? Are we watching it carefully, keeping it out of harm's way, training it to know and love Him and do His Will? What about its studies, its amusements, its books, and its friends; its thoughts, words, deeds, habits, behaviour to others, which must all improve or injure it? Royal children have a very careful training. Things that might be passed over in others cannot be passed over in them. Their rank, and the position that will be theirs later, require excellencies in them which are not required in others. Their appearance, their health, their growth, all have to be attended to, for the King will ask about all these things. He will not be pleased if they are suffered to get into ugly ways that could not be allowed at Court.

So it is with the children of God. Nothing in His eyes is little or unimportant that concerns those who are to be near and dear to Him for all eternity. Are we going to make a grievance of this? Why, we ought to be proud of it! What nobler work could we have than that of preparing our souls for eternal companionship with God and His Blessed Angels and Saints? Upon what shall we spend our

pains if not upon this? Is not all we can do for our immortal soul labour well bestowed? Can we find it in our hearts to grudge it anything? Whatever we do for our soul is a work *done for eternity*. Whatever has been sanctified in it here, will be glorified in it hereafter.

What have I done for my soul up to now? God says to me, "Suppose I were to ask you *now* for an account of your charge, what would you have to tell Me? Is it growing up like one of My children? Is it at all like its Father in Heaven, like its Elder Brother, like its Mother the Queen of Heaven, like its brothers and sisters the Angels and Saints? Is it being kept from all things that would harm it, from sin? And is it being made ready to come Home?

I will give thee thy wages."

"Oh, yes, that reminds us of another thing we found out. But first, how can we be servants of God, and get wages, and be His children too?"

Not a bad question. But you answered it yourself just now when you told us that King Pharoah adopted the little Moses. We are by necessity the servants of God. God Himself could not help it being so. It comes of our being His creatures. But He has adopted His servants as His children, and given them all the privileges of children. And so after thinking of ourselves as His servants like Cyrus, we have gone on to consider ourselves as "most dear children," yet remembering all the time that we are created to know, love, and *serve—that* we must never forget. We are servants then and children at the same time, and so we get wages for

our work. Now, what have you found out about the wages?

"Because it is a great deal of trouble to bring ourselves up properly, God says: *I will give thee thy wages*, and because He says, '*I* will give,' they will be good wages."

And the strange part of it is that the wages are for taking care of what is our own. When Jochabed held out her hand for the Princess' gold, she must have felt it was scarcely fair to be paid so handsomely for nursing her own child.

So it will be with us when God says to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"[1]—when He shows us how pleased He is with our work, and how He is going to reward every little tiny thing we have done for the soul He has entrusted to us.

You say to me, my God, "*Take this child of Mine and nurse it for Me, I will give thee thy wages.*" And I say to You, "*Take, O Lord, and receive it back from my hands.* I will nurse it *for You*, train it *for You.*" I will take trouble, I will not count the cost, for of course it will cost. I will deny myself for its sake and to please You, and I will come to You for all it needs.

I thank You for making me Your child in holy Baptism. If I must be proud, let me be proud *of this*. And let me behave as Your child always. As Your child I must hate above all things what dishonours You, my Heavenly Father. I must hate

[1] St. Matt. 25.

above all things, sin—mortal sin, venial sin, every sin, even the very least. And I must hate it, not so much from the fear of Hell or Purgatory, as from the fear of offending and grieving You. As Your child, I must love all that You love, all that brings You honour and praise and glory. I am to be with You for all eternity. I have to take my place in Your Heavenly Court. I must be getting ready. I know quite well there are many things in my soul You cannot like, faults I cannot take to Heaven with me. Quarrelling, storytelling, wilful distractions in prayer, laziness, greediness, make ugly marks which must be got rid of here or in Purgatory. My God, make me wise enough to get rid of them *here*. Let me ask myself often, when I am going to say or do anything: "*Is this worthy of a child of God?*" I do not want to be a disgrace to You, my Heavenly Father. I should like You to be proud of me some day—to see that Your gifts to me have not been wasted—that I have not been ungrateful to You—that I have proved myself Your obedient, loving child, a credit to You, most generous Father. Give me such a love of You as Your children ought to have, and increase this love in my heart each time I say, "*Our Father, Who art in Heaven.*"

IV.

THE ROYAL ROBE.

And white robes were given to every one of them.
(Apoc. 6, 11.)

WHAT was the first thought of Pharaoh's daughter as she looked into the cradle dripping with Nile water on every side? Surely to preserve the life of the little babe, lest what had been so wonderfully saved should be lost again.

And this is the thought of the Church as she receives into her arms the little Christian child all sparkling with the waters of Baptism. Like the infant Moses, it will have to be prepared in many ways for its high destiny, but the first, the chief care, must be to preserve its life.

Now what is this life, the life of the soul? Look at our first parents, as they walk together in their glorious beauty amid the flowers of the earthly Paradise. Everything in them was perfect, body and mind and heart and soul perfect; no sickness, no ignorance, no unruly passions, no sin. God had given to their human nature all that it needed for its perfection, all that they needed to be happy on this earth, which was their natural home. Could He do

more for them than this? Yes. He loved these dear creatures of His with such a marvellous love, that He was not content with giving them an earthly Paradise suited to their earthly natures. He wanted them to be with Him for ever in His Heavenly Paradise, where He is seen face to face. To this exceeding glory and happiness they had no manner of right. Nay, their human nature, perfect as it was, could not have borne it without a special gift of God, any more than our eyes can look steadfastly at the full blaze of the summer sun at mid-day. He gave them this special gift, He gave them a *supernatural* power which raised and strengthened their human nature, and enabled them to behold Him face to face. This gift is grace. It was a gift so great that all His other presents to them were as nothing compared with it, and so He told them that rather than part with it they must be ready to lose everything else. "Your money or your life!" says the highwayman, as he darts out upon the lonely traveller and points the revolver at his breast. At once everything is handed out, watch, money, valuables of every kind—all must go where there is question of saving life, the life of the body. All must go, pleasure, comfort, friends, health, the life of the body itself, to save the life of the soul which is the grace of God.

We may think of grace as necessary to us in another way. There are some foreign countries to which we cannot go without a *passport*, that is, we must carry something with us to enable us to pass on. Grace is the passport to the Heavenly

Kingdom, we must have it in this world and carry it safely out of this world up to the gates of Heaven, if we are to be let in. Without it no one ever has, no one ever will get entrance there.

"But what is grace? Is it a real thing?"

Yes, it is a real thing, but something too near to God for us to be able to understand and describe clearly, as we cannot see clearly the brightest clouds round the sun because of his blinding light which they reflect. The Church tells us it is "a Divine quality in the soul, and as it were a kind of splendour and light which makes it beautiful and glorious." The Saints have said grand things about grace. St. Peter's words are the grandest when he says it makes us "*partakers of the Divine Nature*,"[1] that is, as like to God as we can be whilst we are in this world. Just as by the gift of adoption the little Moses was admitted into the family of Pharaoh and became a royal child, so by the grace we receive in Baptism we become the adopted children of God, having a right to our Father's love, our Father's Kingdom, our Father's company through a happy eternity. The Beloved Disciple is amazed that God should love us like this, love us so dearly and raise us so high "*that we should be called, and should be the sons of God*."[2] This goodness of His is all the more wonderful because we are so small and contemptible compared with Him. Think how little you are, how little you know, how little you can do. And think Who God is, how powerful, how wise, how glorious, how beautiful, how rich.

[1] 1 St. Peter 1. [2] 1 St. John 3.

The Egyptians were astonished that the powerful Pharoah should condescend to adopt as his son a little good-for-nothing Hebrew boy. But how much more wonderful it is that little clods of earth should be raised to the dignity of children of God, made brothers and sisters of the holy Angels. We could never have deserved the honour of being His servants, and He makes us His "*most dear children.*"[1]

Not only does this grace which is called *sanctifying* make us holy and pleasing in God's sight, but it enables us to do good works, each of which merits eternal happiness in Heaven.

Who would not prize a gift like this? Plainly we cannot deserve it, and so it is called *grace*, which means something given freely; we say of medicines at a public dispensary, that they are given to the poor gratis, that is, without payment.

Grace makes a real difference in our souls, a difference which we cannot see, but which the Angels and Saints see clearly.

A lady left her seat by the fire one wintry afternoon to close the shutters, draw the curtains, and make all snug for the evening in her cosy little room. It was a dismal scene that she was shutting out, and the sounds that she could not shut out were dismal too. The whistling wind swept by, now driving the sleet in slanting columns across the desolate country, now dashing it in thin hissing lines against the window-panes. Dull and dreary it all was. Yet somehow the very dreariness seemed

[1] Ephes. 5.

to fascinate her, and for a long time she stood looking out and listening, her heart full of many thoughts. At last she was closing the shutters slowly, when there appeared just under the window the bent figure of an old man. His pale thin face was pinched with sickness and with hunger, his tattered clothes were no protection against the cold wet night that was setting in. Seeing the lady he was beginning to loose the pack from his back, when she called out:

"Never mind, my good man, I don't want anything." Oh, the sadness of the voice that came up out of the gloom:

"Very glad to hear it, ma'am, *I want everything*."

There was a difference surely between these two, but it was nothing like the difference between a soul enriched with sanctifying grace and one without it. The first has all it needs to make it happy. "Give me Thy love and Thy grace and I am rich enough," says St. Ignatius. The last *wants everything*.

The change that sanctifying grace makes in the soul we cannot see. Yet so great is this change that at times it appears outwardly in the countenance. Some years ago a priest baptized a converted Jew. He knew the man intimately, he had instructed him carefully. Well, two hours after his baptism he met him in the street and hardly recognized him, his face was so changed.

The beauty of a soul in sanctifying grace charms the holy Angels. Gabriel is "one of the seven

who stand before the Lord."[1] He is used to the unspeakable glory that surrounds the Throne in Heaven. As he came down through the starry skies that night in March on his glorious errand to the earth, he passed with contempt the palaces of kings and all that we call magnificence. But he paused reverently over Mary's cottage, for within was the "House of Gold" herself. He was used to all the glorious things of the City of God, but he was dazzled with the light of her beautiful soul, and exclaimed as he bent low before her: "*Hail, full of grace!*"

God Himself looks down with delight on a soul in the state of grace. Such a soul reflects Him. The waters of a clear lake reflect the sun, and he shares his beauty with them. So does the soul in grace share in some wonderful way all of Himself that God is able to give. It is this made St. Peter say those daring words, that grace makes us "*partakers of the Divine Nature.*"[2]

Now among the millions of men, women, and children that cover the earth to-day, there are only a small portion of baptized souls that thus reflect God. How is it that we are of the number? What have we done to deserve it? Nothing, for grace is given freely. But if we have done nothing and could do nothing to deserve God's grace, we can and we must make Him a return. The return He expects is that we value His gift, and that we try to increase it. Let us see how this is to be done.

[1] Tobias 12. [2] 1 St. Peter 1.

The Church, following the example of our Lord, teaches her children by symbols and by parables. She knows that it is hard for our minds to rise to things that are far above us, things that we cannot see, nor hear, nor feel. And so she puts before us things we can perceive by our senses, and gently lifts us by their help to reach and grasp things invisible.

Our Lord has come to show us the way from this dark world to the bright Home He has prepared for us. She represents Him by *Light*. Our Lady is the way by which we are to go to God. The Church calls her *Gate of Heaven*. Prayer which is so fragrant and refreshing she likens to *incense*. And grace she describes as a *costly robe* that adorns the soul and makes it pleasing in the sight of God.

It is at Baptism that the soul receives the beautiful robe of sanctifying grace, and is clothed with the likeness of God by faith, and hope, and charity. It is then that the Church gives it that solemn charge, "*Receive this white garment and see thou carry it unstained before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

These words deserve to be considered attentively. They show "the innocence which throughout all his whole life the baptized person ought to keep."[1] "Receive this white garment and *see thou* carry it unstained." When your father tells you to do a thing and adds, "now I expect you to see to it," you feel that the thing is important, that harm will come if you do not see to it. You feel too that

[1] *Catechism of Council of Trent.*

there is danger, that you must attend and not be careless.

"You have to be close to the Blessed Sacrament this afternoon," your mother says; "see that you don't dirty your white frock." Do you run heedlessly about into dirty places, up trees, into rough games where your frock will get soiled and torn?

Neither must we be careless about the white robe of sanctifying grace. We *must* have it on when we appear before God in the moment of our death, and death may come at any moment. We must be always ready, always watching. We cannot afford to be heedless. We must not go into places, or amusements, we must keep away from books, newspapers, companions, that would endanger our white robe, we must watch over our thoughts, our words, our actions.

Perhaps you will say this is too much trouble, "We can't be bothered, we can't be always thinking about our souls." Do you say, "You can't be bothered when you are passing near a tottering wall or a crooked ladder in the street"? Do you say then, "It is too much trouble to keep out of harm's way, I can't be always thinking about my body!" Why, without thinking you moved away out of the risk of danger as soon as you saw it. Instinct taught you that. And conscience must be as strong as instinct to make you turn aside whenever you see clearly that your soul is in danger. What is your life compared to your soul! About what will you take trouble, if not for the one thing necessary, to keep your white garment unspotted for the Presence

of God! If you do this one thing in your life, you have done all: if you neglect it, everything else you may do is of no use, you will be miserable for all eternity.

How glorious the Heavenly Jerusalem must be! St. John who saw it tells us: "The wall was of jasper-stone, but the City itself pure gold like to clear glass. . . . And the street of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. . . . There shall not enter into it anything defiled.[1] Its saints are clothed with fine linen glittering and white,[2] and are without spot before the throne of God.[3] And the river of the water of life proceeding from that great white throne was clear as crystal."[4]

How spotless it all is! And we are to be there some day fit for that company. Can we take too much pains to keep our garments *glittering and white?* They "that had overcome" were standing with the harps of God upon the sea of glass—differing as the colours of the sunset, yet beneath all, reflecting all, was that stainless sea, that crystal purity! Notice, it was they "*that had overcome*" that were standing on the sea of glass. They had to fight their way there. "*He that shall overcome shall be clothed in white garments.*" They "*who have not defiled their garment shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy.*"[5] It all speaks of effort. We cannot run about heedlessly and keep our garments spotless. And so we must be on our

[1] Apoc. 21. [2] Apoc. 19. [3] Apoc. 14.
[4] Apoc. 22. [5] Apoc. 3.

guard against *all* sin, against anything and everything that could sully the purity of our soul.

O Paradise, O Paradise,
I want to sin no more,
I want to be as pure on earth
As on thy spotless shore.

Sanctifying grace is also called *habitual*, because it stays with us as a state or habit unless we drive it away by mortal sin. But we shall not keep our souls in grace if we aim at nothing more than this. No one whose highest aim is to avoid mortal sin does avoid it. When you play at "oranges and lemons" you try to keep as far as possible from the line on the floor which marks off your side from the other. If you feel you are being dragged nearer and nearer you get afraid, for a great pull may come and—you are over. So must you fear being drawn near the line that separates mortal sin from venial. You must never say, "Of course I won't commit a mortal sin, but this is only venial and does not matter much." If you get into the habit of saying that, a day will come when the devil will drag you over into mortal sin, not indeed against your will, this he can never do, but by winning over to his side that will of yours which has grown weak and cowardly.

We must not be content then with barely keeping God's grace, we must guard it carefully and try to increase it. It grows by being exercised just as the arm of a smith does. One of the grandest things sanctifying grace does for us is to give us the power

of *meriting*, that is, of earning an increase of grace here and of glory hereafter by every good work we do whilst we remain in this blessed state. Our stock is increased by every Sacrament we receive worthily, by every prayer and good work, and by our obedience to the inspirations of grace.

The rewards in Heaven are not all alike any more than the rewards of this world. And just as our father and mother like to see us trying for the first prizes in this life, so our Heavenly Father wishes to see in us a noble ambition to reach *all* He has prepared for His "most dear children" in the life to come. Our Lord tells us not to care over much for the good things here below, which rust and moth can spoil or thieves can steal away, but to care much, very much for those which are everlasting, and which no one can take from us: He bids us "*lay up treasure*" in Heaven, not simply content ourselves with getting inside.[1]

"But shall we not be quite happy and contented if we get just inside?"

Yes, though with a very different happiness from theirs who have won their way up to the high places. The chief thing, however, that we have to think about is not ourselves and what contents *us*, but God and what contents *Him*. He wants us not only to get into Heaven, but to go up high. And He gives us what we need for this. Seats reserved all along the line of procession on the Queen's Jubilee Day were taken as a matter of course by their owners as soon as they arrived. So with our

[1] St. Matt. 6.

place in Heaven. God means us to go to it straight as a matter of course. It is ours because we have earned it, and we are to take it as a right. And He does so want it to be a high place, where we shall see *all*, hear *all* the delights He has in store for us. He gives us the means to reach that place prepared for us. We will try for it then, and we will use the means. These are within the reach of us all, they are little easy things that all can do. An act of the love of God, of sorrow for our sins, of patience, of kindness to others for God's sake, in the work of a moment. Yet what a difference it makes to our place in Heaven. It increases grace and so increases glory. For as every extra mark gained at examinations helps us to distinction or to honours, so every fresh degree of grace merits for us a new degree of glory in that glorious company where all shall "shine as the sun."[1]

We see then that God our Father is always trying to make our place in Heaven brighter and brighter for us. But He will not do this all by Himself. He made us without ourselves, but He will not bring us to eternal glory without ourselves. A reward is a prize for well-doing, and His will is to give us Heaven by way of reward. So we have to co-operate or work with Him by using our free-will as we ought. Here again we need His help, for of ourselves we cannot do any good work towards our salvation. Not even if our souls are bright and beautiful with sanctifying grace can we by ourselves go on to do works that will merit

[1] St. Matt. 13.

Heaven or a higher place in Heaven. There must be fresh help from God each time. He must not only *dwell* in our soul by sanctifying grace, He must *act* upon it, touch it, stir it.

This touch of His is called actual grace, because it is a passing help to do some good work. You know the difference between an act and a habit. You have a habit, let us hope, of obedience, but if at your father's touch on your shoulder you rise to go out with him, this is an act of obedience. God's touch is felt in this way: He puts the thought of doing good into our minds and moves the will to do it. Then He waits to see whether we will co-operate with Him or not. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man will hear My Voice and open to Me the door, I will come in."[1] We can do as we like. We can take no notice of His knock. We can pretend not to hear. Or we can open the door and let Him in, by giving the consent of our will, by saying "Yes" to what He wants of us. Then He will go on and give us fresh grace to carry out our good resolution; He will work with us in doing the act and help us to complete it. God Himself calls this touch of His a knocking at our door. He speaks of it also as a message. For as a message from your father on earth is whispered into your ear, so is a message from your Heavenly Father breathed into your soul. And therefore it is called an inspiration, or a "breathing into." It is something very precious and has a very wonderful history. Let us look at the history of an inspiration,

[1] Apoc. 3.

any inspiration you like—say to obey when you are inclined to disobey, or to tell the truth when you might escape punishment by telling a lie.

It began—but here we are stopped at once, for it never began at all. As long as God has been God He determined to send you that message from Himself to do good to your soul. We prize what is very old. People will prize a hundred years hence the message we bottle up in the phonograph to-day. How then should we prize the loving message of our Heavenly Father which as long as He has been God He has had in store for us!

We will follow the inspiration on its way. The Blessed watch it as it goes down from the Throne of God like a ray from the sun. They bow their heads reverently as it passes them. They think of all they owe to the inspirations sent them during their life on earth. They see how holy, how beautiful, how wise, how good for us this inspiration is; how it cost our Lord His bitter Death on the Cross. And as it passes out of their bright Heaven into the dark world outside, they wish it God-speed. They do so hope we shall welcome it, and do what it tells us, that all God's love in sending it may not be thrown away. And so with the eyes of Angels and Saints following it, the inspiration comes to us and tries to get into our hearts.

Just as we are going to be disobedient or to tell that untruth, we feel a sudden check, or hear a gentle whisper like the whisper that came to Pilate, "See, thou have nothing to do with that

just Man."[1] What do we do? Do we listen? Do we make the Saints and Angels glad, the Sacred Heart glad by our obedience? Do we let our Lord put another jewel into our crown? Or do we pretend not to hear? Has our Lord to look down sadly on another grace wasted, which He shed His Blood to win?

The saints listen eagerly to these inspirations and obey them. They value grace so much that they desire to increase their store, even at the cost of labour and pain. The prospect of even earthly gain can make heroes.

A Jesuit Father was giving a retreat in an English Convent. There happened to be in the school a little tot made of quicksilver—so everybody firmly believed. She had never been known to be still for two minutes together, and the thing was set down as an impossibility. A good opportunity here, thought the Father, of proving what the hope of reward will do. And he planned a wise plan in that wise head of his.

One morning, there was a curious interview in his room, between a grave personage seated before piles of letters, and a little lady perched on a chair opposite. The interview was in silence and was all *view*, the attention of the little lady being wholly occupied with the cake that was to be hers if she "could manage to be quite still for five minutes." There sat his Reverence busy with his writing, his watch before him. There sat the tiny patience on

[1] St. Matt. 27.

her monument as still as a dead fly. The minute hand moved slowly, one, two, three, four, five—the ordeal was over! Down slid the heroine from the chair, seized her prize, and——. What do you suppose? Made off as fast as her legs could carry her to forget, in the cake's company, the sufferings of the torture-chamber? Not a bit of it. Grasping it with both hands, and eyeing significantly a piled up plate on the table, she planted herself in front of the arm-chair with, "Try me again, Father."

Is such an example too high for us? Can we find it in our hearts to say this when a trial is over? Are we as brave as this little maid?

"Ah, but you see she got a prize directly."

True, a cake with plums in it. And we get—only the Kingdom of Heaven, and even that we have to wait for. You are right, there *is* a difference, the bargain is hardly a fair one. And so we shake our heads and turn away like the rich young man. Not all of us though. Those plucky people we call the saints did not turn away. They jumped at such a chance. Their hearts were set on laying up treasure in Heaven. In the midst of persecution, vexation, trouble of every kind, their motto was: "*Yet more, O Lord, yet more!*" More opportunity of merit, more grace, more love of God here, and more glory, more possession of God hereafter. And so after big trials that would have taken our breath away, and little daily ones that make us pout, they could look up and say with a smile, "Try me again, Father."

However did they manage? Surely they must have been made of different stuff from ourselves. Or was it prayer and patience, and little daily effort that made the difference?

It is a very dangerous thing and a very sad thing, to throw away the graces God sends us. It is dangerous, because our graces hang together like the links of a chain. God means the chain to draw us up to Heaven, but what is He to do if we keep breaking the links! Is it fair to expect that He will keep mending them or making new ones?

And it is sad as well as dangerous. We will suppose that some day whilst you are playing at cards, your father comes to you with a present, one that has cost him a great deal of money, a great deal of loving thought, and some self-denial. It is a ticket that will take you to Italy by that most sumptuous of trains, "The Rome Express." He puts it into your hand with a smile, and watches your face. You give a careless glance at his gift, saying it is too much trouble to go all that way, and tossing the ticket into the fire, go on with your game.

"Oh, who could do such a thing, who could be so wicked and ungrateful? None of *us*."

Perhaps not. But we can do something very like it. We could not bear to see the disappointment on our father's face caused by such a heartless act. Yet we can bear to sadden the Heart of Jesus by throwing away one after another, quite as a matter of course, the helps to Heaven, which it has taken all His Precious Blood to buy for us.

Yes, the great thing we have to do in this world

is to keep and to increase the treasure of grace. What a treasure it is! So great, that our Lord died to purchase it for us. He has merited it for us by His Precious Blood; it flows to us from His Sacred Wounds. It is grace that prepares us for the glory of Heaven. It does more. It produces this glory as a seed produces its fruit. And so grace is called the seed of glory. You look at the seed and say, "That will be a fruit-tree some day." The Angels see grace in our souls and say to one another, "That will be glory in our Heaven some day."

All of us have need of grace, poor sinners that they may repent of their sins and be forgiven, and the good that they may keep good and persevere.

Grace is all-powerful. By its help we can break all our bad habits, overcome all temptations, and gain all the virtues we need. It was grace and their working with grace that made all the saints, and strengthened even little children to give their lives for Christ by martyrdom.

We say grace and our working with grace, for though grace is so strong, it never *forces* our will. God leaves us free; we can if we choose take it and use it and gain Heaven by it, or we can throw it away.

A great point in obeying the inspirations God sends us, is to obey *fast*. Hesitation, consideration, whether or not we will give God what He asks, too often ends in refusing Him. And so He tells us to give quickly: "*Say not to thy friend, 'Go and come*

again, and to-morrow I will give to thee,' when thou canst give to-day."[1]

If we feel we want a great deal of grace to be good, to overcome temptation and our bad habits, we must ask for it and God will give it, for He has promised. Prayer is the money with which we buy from Him all the grace we need. We get grace too, as we have seen, by every Sacrament worthily received, by every good work. Is it not our own fault then, if we do not get to Heaven fast, and take with us plenty of grace to be turned into glory there?

One day long ago, two men were roughly summoned from the dungeon where they had spent the last night of their lives, and brought out into the streets of Jerusalem to die.

It was a just sentence, for their lives had been a long record of injustice and sin. So there was little or no pity for them from their fellow-men. They were to receive the just reward of their deeds, and the world would be safer and better when they were out of it.

But One pitied them, He Whose pity never fails as long as life lasts, for He hates none of the things that He has made, "the Lord that loveth souls." And He had prepared for them in the last hour of their lives, a grace so stupendous that it has never been offered to any but themselves.

[1] Prov. 3.

They were to die in company with their Saviour, in company with the Lord of life. The first application of the Precious Blood which was to be shed before their eyes He had ready for them, that He might wash them therein and admit them stainless and beautiful into a blessed and eternal life before that day was done. He was counted as one of them, and so St. Luke says, "There were also two *other* malefactors led with Him to be put to death." As they trod the Way of the Cross together, He was praying for them "with a strong cry and tears," that both might accept His grace and be saved. The people had received them with hisses as they came out into the streets. But as the procession moved on, they were forgotten, for all the cruelty and rage of that day had to be kept for Him, Who was tottering on behind, staggering at every step and falling again and again beneath His heavy Cross.

The thieves had heard of Him and His wonderful works, and a hope sprang up in their hearts that as their fellow-sufferer, He might perchance be moved to mercy, and save them from their cruel death. So when their crosses were raised one on either side of Him, they cried out clamorously, "Save Thyself and us!" He was only too ready to grant that prayer and to save them. At once a great grace went forth from His Sacred Heart to enlighten their minds and to touch their hearts that they might notice the Divine meekness of Him Who hung between them, and be brought through faith in Him to sorrow and forgiveness. The grace

was *for both*, for God "*will have all men to be saved.*"[1] The outstretched arms were ready to draw *both* to Himself, the Heart was pleading for *both*.

With what result? Because he could not have just what he had asked for, because his Saviour would not save him in the way he wanted, one of them turned away blaspheming. He shut his heart against the grace that knocked for entrance there, and would have none of the salvation offered him. He turned his head away from Jesus. He would not meet those eyes of mercy. He would not hear the words of pardon. He would be wilful to the last; he would die in his sins. He would be lost rather than humble himself and say, "I am sorry for my sins. I will bear the punishment they deserve. Have mercy on me and save me, Lord, as Thou knowest best."

And the other? Grace was knocking at the door of his heart too, and knocking hard. It wanted him to give up the desire of life which had made him call out mockingly: "Save Thyself and us," and turn in faith and sorrow to the patient Sufferer by his side. There was no time to lose, in a little while it would be too late. He made his choice. Out into the darkness went the cry, "*Lord, remember me!*" And the answer came at once: "*Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*"[2] *This day*—now nearly done; *with Me*, as truly as you are with Me now; *in Paradise*—the reward of one moment's prompt correspondence with grace.

[1] 1 Timothy 2. [2] St. Luke 22.

Whether we shall save our souls or not depends on the way in which we obey or reject the whisperings of grace which come to us all; to those whose lives have been led far away from God like the poor thieves', and to those who are His favourites and friends like the Apostles.

See another picture. Again it is grace, the same grace offered to two men, accepted by one and bringing him to salvation, refused by the other and leaving him ruined for eternity.

That same morning of Good Friday, very early, about an hour after midnight, there sat in the courtyard of the palace of Annas one of the Twelve. He sat by the fire amidst the enemies of his Master, Who up yonder was receiving the sentence of condemnation. And he was warming himself. The old sword which he had drawn in the garden was left without, and as he sat there, his hands stretched towards the blaze, his countenance showed signs of fear. A servant-girl came up, and looking earnestly at the rough face, on which the firelight was playing, said, carelessly, to those standing about: "This man was also with Him."

Peter was weak. His natural courage and the vehement love for his Master on which he had relied awhile ago had cooled down. He had not heeded our Lord's words, warning him of his fall, nor the injunction to watch and pray, because temptation was at hand. He had slept when he should have been watching; he was warming himself now when he should have been suffering by

his Master's side. He was weak therefore and ready to be overthrown. And so, when the girl pointed him out to the bystanders, saying, "This man was also with Him," fear overmastered every other feeling, and he denied flatly: "Woman, I know Him not." The cock crew as he went out at the gate, but Peter gave no heed. For another hour he remained in the midst of danger, listening to blasphemies against Him for Whose sake he had left all things, yet unmoved, unrepentant. And when at length a man there persisted that he was one of this Man's disciples, saying: "Thou also art one of them," again he denied with an oath: "I know not the Man."

Sin that is not blotted out by sorrow, drags us by its own weight into fresh sin. Poor Peter was very weak now. The cock had crowed and still he remained there in the occasion of sin, sinking deeper and deeper. Would the Hand that was once stretched out to him over the stormy sea save him again? He talked on, trying to appear as one of the rest, not noticing that every word was betraying him. "Surely thou art one of them," the bystanders said at last, "for even thy speech doth discover thee." "Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the Man." The cock crew the second time.

Jesus was passing along the verandah that joined the palaces of Annas and Caiaphas. His hands were bound. But His eyes were free, and they could seek and save that poor sinking soul. "And the Lord, turning, looked on Peter. And

Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as He had said, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter going out wept bitterly." He did not shut his heart against the light that streamed from those Eyes. He did not steel his soul against the smarting reproach of conscience that reminded him of his First Communion only a few hours ago, of his priesthood, of his protestations, of the tender warnings he had thrown away. He let the bitter thoughts sink into his soul with all their pain.

But still, as on the stormy sea, he clung to his Master fast. He wept bitterly, but it was not as those who have no hope. He was too weak to show himself again in the daylight, and so he went and hid himself away with his breaking heart, whilst the Scourging and the Crowning of Thorns were winning pardon for his sin, whilst the Way of the Cross was being trod, and the Precious Blood was poured out for him on Calvary. And when all was over and evening fell, and John, pitying and tender, came to him from Mary like a ray from the moon, he let himself be led to her feet. He let the Mother of Sorrows pour comfort into his heart, and so waited and wept in trusting, humble sorrow, till, on Easter-day, his Master came Himself to comfort him.

Sadly we turn from this fallen Apostle, who, by trusting in the Sacred Heart, regained all he had lost, to that other among the Twelve who fell never to rise again.

The Paschal moon was lighting the slopes of

Olivet and the dark trees of the olive orchard when our Lord rose from His long prayer and crept feebly to the garden gate to seek a little comfort in the company of His Apostles. They were asleep, all asleep. No, not all. One was drawing near who was to wound the Heart of his Master as Peter never wounded It, one who had steeled his soul against every warning, and thrust aside again and again the Hand that was stretched out to save him. We wonder how the heart of Judas could have been so hard as to resist the tenderness of Jesus, to Whom, as he knew well, all his wicked plans were known.

What a succession of stupendous graces that miserable Apostle flung away! Like Peter, he had his warning in the Supper Room. Like Peter, his feet were washed and kissed. Probably he made his First Communion with the rest. Any way, he received from our Lord that "morsel of bread dipped," which was a mark of special friendship. During the three years that he had lived with his Master, full of promise at first, then getting gradually cold in His service, he had had warning after warning about the predominant passion that was eating away all that was good in him. He could have conquered it. He had our Lord to run to for help like the rest, he was loved like the rest, specially loved as it seems. Like the others he had seen our Blessed Lord walk on the waves, and still the storm, and cure every manner of disease, and pass unhurt through the midst of His enemies. He knew Him to be God. But he let his evil

passions rule him, and inspirations fell upon his soul like summer rain upon a rock. Softly and untiringly they fell. Even when he came at the head of an armed band to betray his Master with a kiss, our Lord would not give him up. Wan and haggard, yet calm and full of majesty, He stood forth in the moonlight and said, "Whom seek ye?"

"They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus said to them: I am He. And Judas also who betrayed Him stood with them. As soon therefore as He had said to them: I am He: they went backward and fell to the ground."[1]

Think how helpless Judas must have felt, how utterly in the power of Him Whom he had come to betray. And think of his rising after that and coming up to his Master and saying, "Hail Rabbi!" and kissing Him!

Our Lord had one grace more for him, one appeal yet to make to that hard, hard heart.

"Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Then they came up, and laid hands on Jesus, and held Him. And then the despair of Judas began. He had so often seen our Lord escape that he thought He would pass through the midst of His enemies as before. He thought he might enjoy his miserable pieces of silver and that all would come right somehow. But when next morning he found that our Lord was condemned, he cast down the money in the Temple and went and hanged himself. Alas! he had resisted grace too often and too

[1] St. John 18.

long. And when the demon who had tempted him to his sin, told him it was too great to be forgiven, he fell into despair, he cut himself off from mercy, and the fearful words in the Supper Room were verified: "*It were better for that man, if he had never been born.*"

See what comes of wilfulness! If Judas and the bad thief are where they are for resisting the grace that would have saved them, can it be a light thing *for us* to shut our ears and harden our hearts against the whispers of God?

V.

REBELLION.

The Lord was moved with anger, because His own sons and daughters provoked Him . . . unfaithful children.
(Deut. 32, 19.)

EVERY English heart in Bombay throbbed with indignation, one October morning in 1896, when the news of what had taken place in the city during the night got noised abroad. What had happened?

On a prominent point of the esplanade there rises from a tesselated platform a superb statue in white Carrara marble of Queen Victoria. It is one of the finest ornaments of the city, and receives almost a religious veneration from the natives. In the early morning it is no uncommon thing to see the coolies doing "pujah" to the "Burra Rani Saheb" as they pass to their daily toil.

Now during the night of October 16 this statue was grossly insulted. Some one clambered up to the head and poured over it a quantity of tar, which trickled all over the crown and face, and fell in dark streams over the sceptre and the robes on to the steps below. A number of old shoes and slippers

of native make were tied together with a bit of rotten rope, to make an ugly necklace for the Empress-Queen. What an insult to the mighty Sovereign over whose dominions the sun never set!

The news of the occurrence spread quickly through the city, and searching inquiries were made by the police to find out the culprits. Far and near the outrage was the one subject of conversation.

Yet the consternation of the English was nothing compared to the dismay of the natives. Not, we may well suppose, from any strong feeling of loyalty, but simply as subjects bound to honour and obey, they were horrified at so outrageous an offence against the Sovereign. They spoke of it as a most sinful crime, were eager to know whose "wicked hands" had done the evil deed, and to prove that the "wretches" were no natives. They showed themselves as deeply pained as the Europeans at what had occurred, and as anxious that the offenders should be brought to justice.

So great was their terror, and so widespread, that when in 1897 the plague swept over vast districts already desolated by famine, and the native quarters in Bombay were all but doomed to the flames as the only means of stamping out the disease, both plague and famine were taken as a judgment—a just punishment for the crime that had been committed in their midst.

These poor natives exaggerated the harm that had been done. But they were right in believing

that wrong cannot go unpunished. Reason taught them this. Reason and faith teach us the same thing. There is nothing they teach more plainly than this—the wickedness of revolt, the terrible guilt and the terrible consequences of sin.

What! could it be a great crime to insult Queen Victoria and a small one to insult the King of kings? To disfigure a Queen's image is a deed that rouses the anger of a nation. He who did it must be sought out and punished. And will God see without indignation His image in the soul begrimed, trampled on, blotted out? Which of us can think this?

"Nobody. But how is it we don't feel nearly so much shocked about sin as about the rudeness to the Queen?"

There are many reasons. One is the usual cause of all our failings—we do not take the trouble to think. For this there is no remedy but to take the trouble. Another reason is because God is so very far above us that we cannot understand what it is to insult Him.

If you notice what went on in your mind just now when you heard of the disrespect to the Queen, you will find you were comparing the lowness of the person who was guilty of that insult—some poor miserable native, no doubt—with the dignity of the Sovereign who was insulted.

"Yes, I was, and I wondered how he dared."

It was by the distance between the two that you measured the offence. But when we come to God, the distance is infinite between the one who

offends and the One Who is offended. Infinite means without end. So that the distance simply has no end. You might set off from the creature, any creature you like, our Blessed Lady herself, and you would never, never, never come to God. Not only would you never come to Him, but you would never come any nearer to Him than when you set off, even if you were to go on for ever. What must that distance be! We cannot get it into our minds at all, and so we cannot understand the awfulness of sin which insults this Infinite Being. But, though we cannot understand, we can see that this rising up against God must be something unspeakably dreadful, and something we ought to fear and hate more than anything in the world. We must try to have some idea of its hatefulness, or we shall never hate it as we ought and as we must if we are to avoid it and save our souls.

"What are we to do, then?"

The saints come to our help as is their wont. They are our brothers and sisters, who have gone before us into the Kingdom of God, and they pass on their experience to us, that we may find the way easier. They tell us we must find out what sin is, not by simply rattling over the words, "Sin is an offence against God, or any thought, word, or deed," &c., but by taking the trouble to understand what these words mean. Taking the trouble—that is the secret of most things. Without taking pains nothing is to be had in this world. If, then, we want to have the hatred of sin which we are bound to have, "we must make use of such considerations

as may move us to it," that is, think quietly how bad, how ungrateful, how unjust it is.

Sin would be bad even if it were not forbidden. In itself it is bad, and in forbidding it God only forbids us to do what will hurt and disgrace us if we do it. Irreverence, stealing, telling lies, greediness—all these are things to be ashamed of, even if there were no command of God about them.

Now, do we like what we know to be bad? Did you ever find yourself liking anything that is nothing but ugliness, disease, rottenness? Sin is all this, and more. It is ugliness which would terrify us, if we could see it as we shall see it some day. It is a disease worse by far than the loathsome diseases to be seen in our hospitals, and there are frightful sights there. It is rottenness to the core. The mere thought of anything rotten fills us with disgust. It is something once good gone hopelessly bad, been utterly spoilt, changed, ruined—just the work of sin upon the soul once so fair, so fresh, so delicately beautiful.

Francis Borgia, Duke of Gandia, was the star and pride of the Spanish Court in the days of the Emperor Charles V. He was the Emperor's trusty friend, and the Empress Isabella had made him her Master of the Horse. The beautiful Empress died, and the Duke had to see that the royal remains were safely conveyed to Granada and laid in the vaults of the Chapel Royal. It was an honourable trust, and he discharged it faithfully, never quitting the corpse during the five days' journey from Toledo,

even sleeping beside it alone in the churches where it rested at night. When the funeral procession reached the city of Granada, the coffin was received with every mark of respect and carried to the vault in the Cathedral, the last resting-place of the sovereigns of Spain. Round it stood the clergy and principal personages of the city, together with the nobles who formed the escort. The magnificent pall was removed, and the Duke of Gandia approached to take his oath that she who lay there was no other than the Empress Isabella, consort of His Imperial Majesty Charles V. The lid of the coffin was lifted, and—the bystanders fell back in horror. So fearful a change had taken place that all turned away and retreated to the farthest corner of the vault.

All but one. The Duke did not turn away. Pale, yet unshrinking, he stood there, trying to find in the hideous object before him the least resemblance to the beautiful face in his memory. It was useless—every trace of beauty had passed away. He saw the awful change that death had brought. He saw the hideous deformity of what had been so fair. He felt the unbearable presence of the corruption that had driven away the most devoted. And still he stood there motionless as a statue, and gazed and gazed. At length he left the vault, went to his room, and locked himself in.

When he re-appeared next day men said he was a changed man. Good, even holy, as he had been before, fulfilling carefully all the duties of his state, he was changed now. That face had wrought the change. "Never again," he said, "will I serve a

master who can die." And he gave up his high posts, his place at Court, the favour of the Emperor, his lands, his children, to enter as a Jesuit novice the service of another Master.

It was the frightful effect of death upon the body that produced the change in Francis Borgia. Oh, what a change there would be in us, in our idea of mortal sin, if we could see the effects of *that* death upon the soul! Strong men turned away shuddering from the sight in the vaults of Granada. We could not see that other sight *and live.*

Sin, then, is bad in itself, bad even if it were not forbidden. And it is unjust, unjust *to God*—this is worse still.

One of the saints bids us think what God has a right to have from us, and then to ask ourselves if we give Him His rights. If we do not, then we are unfair, and unfairness with God beyond a certain point is sin. We say beyond a certain point, for God is very gentle with us. He does not *require* us to give Him all that He has a right to have. He would *like* this and that; He would *like* us to be generous with Him as His saints were. But it is only when we come to the Commandments that He says: "Now this you *must* give Me; that you *must not* do." If we break a *commandment* of His there is sin. We said at the beginning that we are *servants*, servants of God, sent to do a work. We have been seeing how we are His children, Royal Children, Heirs of Heaven, with wonderful privileges. But we must not forget that we are

servants still, bound in strict justice not only to love Him, but to serve Him by doing His will.

These are days in which we hear much about rights—the rights of man, the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of the workman and the poor man and the prisoner, nay, of the dumb animals that serve us, whatever these disputed rights may be. Each of these classes must have its rights seen to nowadays. Injustice and wrong must be banished from the face of the earth, we say.

The idea that the word "wrong" brings to our mind is chiefly that of injustice. We speak of the wrongs of Mary Stuart, meaning the injustice that she suffered for twenty years at the hands of her cousin Elizabeth. Nothing stirs our hearts like the sight of wrong in this sense. We cannot bear it patiently, we long to see it avenged. Sometimes we take the law into our own hands and punish the wrong-doer ourselves.

But there has stood One in the midst of us Whom we know not. In all this noisy talk about our rights we forget His, and, what is more, forget that we ourselves have no rights but those He is pleased to give us. Few trouble themselves about *His* rights; few, very few, are fair *to Him*. Can this be true? Let us see if it is true, and begin by seeing what in all fairness God can claim.

We claim as our own what we have made. It is ours to use, to dispose of, to destroy, as we think good. No one may touch it unless with our leave, much less use it for a purpose we disapprove. That

drawing for the South Kensington Examination on which we spent so much time and pains, may it be taken to light the fire or to stuff a packing-case? The idea fills us with indignation. The work of our hands is our own, woe to him who misuses or uses heedlessly what we guard so jealously! *I made it*, we say, which is the same as saying, *it is altogether mine.*

So, too, with what we buy. We have paid its price; it has passed into our hands; we alone have control over it now; it is to be used only at our will and pleasure. *I have bought it, it is mine.*

Again, a thing is our own that we get by gift. All rights the former owner had have passed over to us. It is ours to use and dispose of just as we like. *It was given to me*, we say, *it is mine.* Mine always, the gift cannot be recalled. Who should recall it? We are the owners now.

If we belonged to God in any one of these ways, we should be altogether His. What, then, if we are His, not in one way only, but in all three! He made us, we are His *by Creation: "Is not He thy Father, Who possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?"*[1] Creator is a far greater name than maker. Creation requires infinite power and gives the most absolute right over the creature brought out of nothing, a right to itself and to its obedience and to all it has and all it can do. God alone can have the claim of a Creator. We needed the paper and pencil for our drawing, as well as the

[1] Deut. 22.

skill of brain and eye and hand. All these had to be supplied to us before we could make a line. Think what it is to make something out of nothing by an act of Almighty Power! Think how that thing so wonderfully created must depend on Him Who gave it its being; how it is bound to look to Him and His Will to see how it may use what it has received from Him—the senses of its body, the powers of its soul, the affections of its heart. Surely, it may not do anything, think anything, love or hate anything but as He wills: "*For thus saith the Lord that created thee and formed thee and called thee by thy name: thou art Mine.*" [1]

Can anything be added to the rights God has over us by creation? Yes, for we are His in another way, *by Purchase*. When we had sold ourselves into slavery He redeemed us, that is, bought us back by giving all He had—His toil, His tears, His Blood, His Life. "*You are not your own, for you are bought with a great price,*" [2] St. Paul reminds us. Slaves are sometimes purchased by Catholic missionaries from the cruel merchants who steal them away from their homes and sell them as if they were cattle. These poor creatures look up inquiringly into the faces of their new masters to see what they are going to do with them. They have been bought, they are the white man's property, and must be ready for anything he may tell them to do, for any work to which he may put them. Is this how we look to our Lord, Who bought us out

[1] Isaias 43. [2] 1 Cor. 6.

of a cruel slavery, "*not with corruptible things as gold and silver . . . but with His own Precious Blood*"?[1]

The third way in which we belong to God is of our own making, we are His *by Gift.* When we were too tiny to know what was being done for us, God made us His children and heirs of Heaven by Holy Baptism. Sovereigns are required to make certain promises before they can enter into possession of their rights. So are the heirs to the Heavenly Kingdom.

"How can little babies make promises?"

They cannot do it themselves, but they can do it by those who stand for them at the font and promise in their name. Our godfathers and godmothers made these promises for us that we might be numbered at once among the children of God and have our souls made beautiful and pleasing in His sight by sanctifying grace. But the time came when we were old enough to understand something of God's goodness—how He had been loving us and planning for us all through the long eternity when He lived quite by Himself, and how He had sent us into this world for a little while that we might get ready for the better and brighter world He has in store for us. When we were able to understand this, and the rights He has over us as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, we were bound to make for ourselves those solemn promises which are called our Baptismal Vows. We promised to renounce the devil with all his works, the world with all its pomps, the flesh with all its temptations. By these

[1] 1 St. Peter 1.

promises we made a gift of ourselves to God, putting into His Hands in a new way what already belonged to Him by Creation, by Redemption, and by Sanctification.

See, then, in how many ways we belong to God. And see how terrible an injustice sin must be that takes away from Him what has been made His over and over again. The soul that commits a mortal sin lifts itself up against its Creator, and says: "*I will not serve.*"[1] It turns against its Redeemer and tramples on the Blood that bought it. It casts out of His Temple the Holy Spirit its Sanctifier, with the precious grace that made it pleasing in His sight. It breaks its solemn promises to God and goes over to the side of the enemy.

"But I am sure no one means to do all those wicked things. I don't want to do wrong when I commit sins, I only want to do as I like."

But if God forbids what you like, then it *is* wrong, and to do it is to refuse Him the obedience to which He has a right. If His commandment binds under venial sin, there is venial sin only in the disobedience; if it binds under mortal, the disobedience is a mortal sin.

"I see. But is it easy to commit a mortal sin? I should be so afraid of doing it without knowing?"

That you can never do, for it takes three things to make a mortal sin, *grave matter, full advertence, full consent.* By *matter,* we mean what the sinful act is in itself. A lie of excuse, a wilful distraction

[1] Jerem. 2.

in prayer, are venial sins because the matter is light. Missing Mass through one's own fault on Sunday, a lie that does serious injury to another, are mortal sins, because the matter is weighty, or as we say, grave. *Full advertence* means that we remember at the time we do the action that it is grievously sinful. Lastly, there must be the *full consent* of our will. It must say "Yes" to the temptation, and go right over to the devil's side. Now here are the three powers of the soul all joining to commit the sin. The understanding knows the matter is grave; the memory remembers this at the time temptation comes; the will gives its full consent to the temptation. Is it easy to do all this without knowing it?

"Of course not. You could not do it if you tried."

We will think presently who it is that has the boldness thus to rise up against God, and Who He is that is offended. But we have found out enough already to show us that sin is the most terrible of evils.

The Church tells us that we can never hate it enough, that as the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure, so we should hate immeasurably everything that offends Him or grieves Him.

The thought of God offended by sin made St. Dominic so sad that he passed whole nights weeping for the sins of others. St. Ignatius was ready to suffer the pains of Purgatory till the Day of Judgment, to prevent one mortal sin.

We are told by the Sire de Joinville, the biographer and friend of St. Louis, that from his infancy even to his last day the holy King was remarkable for his horror of sin. It was the fruit of his mother's teaching. She often said to him: "Fair son, nothing in this world is so dear to me as you are, but I would rather see you dead than stained with one single mortal sin." "One day," says Joinville, "the saintly King said to me: 'Which would you rather, become a leper, or commit a mortal sin?' And I who never lied to him answered that I would rather commit thirty mortal sins than be a leper. When we were alone, he made me sit down at his feet, and said to me: 'What is that you say?' And I repeated my words. Then said he to me: 'You speak like a rash man, for no leprosy is so hideous as a soul in mortal sin. . . . When a man dies he is healed of the leprosy of the body, but the leprosy of the soul will last as long as God Himself. Wherefore I pray you for God's sake and for mine, to desire rather that any ill befall your body, whether leprosy or aught else, than mortal sin infect your soul."

The Saint's dying words to his son are like the echo of his mother's long years before: "Fair son, rather suffer all kinds of sorrows and torments than offend God by mortal sin. . . . Strive that all sin be done away from the land, especially blasphemy and heresy."

We have thought of the *malice* or wickedness of sin, of its *injustice*, of its *boldness*. But what shall



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we say of its *ingratitude?* We must try to bring this home to ourselves.

There have been few hearts like the heart of King David since the world began. It was a heart according to God's own. Its love once given was never taken away. It loved Saul, who repaid its love with jealousy and hate. It loved Jonathan, the son of Saul, so vehemently that the Scripture says the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David. It loved the son of Jonathan for Jonathan's sake. But most of all it loved Absalom. On this royal child was poured out all the riches of that strong and tender heart. "Thou art always with me and all that I have is thine."[1] Nothing was too good for him, everything was at his disposal —the palace with its treasures, the army, honours, power. All that King David had, all that was nearest and dearest to him he made over to this child of his heart; he trusted him with all. And how did Absalom repay the father who, you must remember, was also his king? Not only with ingratitude and treachery, turning the hearts of his people away from him, but with the hatred that sought his life. "And Achitophel said to Absalom: I will arise and pursue after David this night. And coming upon him, for he is now weary and weak-handed, I will defeat him, and when all the people is put to flight that is with him, I will kill the King who will be left alone. . . . And his saying pleased Absalom." [2]

[1] St. Luke 15. [2] 2 Kings 17.

"The horrid wretch! But no child does such wicked things as that now."

Every one who commits mortal sin does worse by far We cannot think of Absalom without horror —how is it we have no horror of ourselves! It seems to us a terrible thing to insult the statue of a Queen, because it was an act of rebellion. But what if the rebel be a child and a royal child! What if the rebel be ourselves, and He against Whom we rise the King of kings, our Father Who is in Heaven!

"But how can it be like Absalom to do a mortal sin? He wanted to kill his father, but we don't want to do harm to God when we commit sin."

Absalom wanted to kill his father, because this was the only means by which he could have his own way. You must bear in mind that Absalom, besides being a son, was a subject. He had to obey the laws. He could not take his father's place. But this was what he wanted to do: "Oh, that they could make me judge over the land, that all that have business might come to me,"[1] he said. It was only by dethroning the King and taking his life that he could be free to do as he liked. He would be free at all costs, and so he wanted his father's death.

We are children of God and "*most dear children*," but we are also subjects and servants. "Human nature is by necessity the servant of God," says Pope Leo XIII. God Himself cannot make it otherwise. We *must* keep the law. God would have to be dethroned and cease to be God

[1] 2 Kings 15.

before we could be free to break His Commandments. We want to be free, we commit sin, and so do that which if He were not the God He is would bring about His destruction. See what sin did with God when it had a chance. How it fell upon Him in His Sacred Passion, and bound and kicked and spat on Him, and hung Him upon the Cross to die a death of shame.

> Sin, cruel sin, 'twas thine,
> Jesus, my God, to slay.

"This sounds so very dreadful that we ought to hate sin like anything. I wish we could. I wish *I* could. I wonder what would make us. I wish sin was something we could see, then perhaps we should hate it. I think perhaps if it wasn't quite so bad we should understand it better."

We can learn a great deal about a thing by noticing its effects. None of us perhaps were much frightened by the shock of the earthquake which shook our beds that morning in December, 1896. This was because we have had little occasion in England to fear these disasters. We do not know much about them. But in countries where the terrible effects of earthquakes and volcanoes are well known, it is not so. You know how the Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were completely buried eighteen hundred years ago by the ashes and stones shot out of Vesuvius. Gardens, vineyards, villas, palaces—all were overwhelmed and destroyed in a few moments.

The raging fires within the earth have done things quite as wonderful in modern times. Open the map of America. Look for the town of Valparaiso in Chili, and picture to yourself, if you can, the scene that took place there on the night of November 19, 1822. Sir John Herschel tells us that the whole coast-line of Chili for about one hundred miles from Valparaiso, with the mighty chain of the Andes, was hoisted at one blow from two to seven feet above its former level. One of the Andes upheaved that night was the gigantic mass of Aconcagua, twenty-four thousand feet high. Mount Etna with Vesuvius at the top of it, and another Vesuvius piled on that, would not come near this tremendous height. What must be the force of the raging furnace pent up within the earth, beneath the quiet, cool grass on which we sit and rest!

By its effects we get some notion of that fire. By the effects of sin we gain some knowledge of what sin must be. Let us look at some of these effects.

God, Who had lived in perfect happiness from eternity, created a countless number of beautiful creatures to share His happiness. These were the Angels. It is not easy for us to get into our minds anything like a clear idea of what an Angel is. It is a being which thinks and wills and loves. It has no shape nor colour, and so we cannot imagine it. We see pictures of pretty little faces between two wings, but the Angels are not like this. When to

suit our needs they have appeared in human form, they have been so majestic and beautiful that men have taken them for God and fallen down to adore them. St. John the Evangelist fell down to worship an Angel who appeared to him. For fear of the Angel who guarded our Lord's sepulchre the strong Roman soldiers "became as dead men."[1] Our own idea of an Angel is a being so lovely and so sweet, that when we want to speak of a person transcendentally beautiful we use the word "angelic."

God loved His holy Angels with a boundless love. And so He determined to give them in the best of ways—the way of reward, the eternal happiness He had prepared for them. They should earn it for themselves by just one act of submission to Him. One act of obedience and service, and all the joys of Heaven should be theirs for ever.

"How easy!"

Yet too hard for some: "Behold they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His Angels He found wickedness."[2] The sin of pride and rebellion found its way into their bright ranks. They were so beautiful and so mighty, that they thought themselves too grand to be servants of God. It was a sin of thought only, but fully consented to. A third part rose up against Him Who made them and said, "*I will not serve.*"[3] And God cast from Him instantly those He had loved so dearly. He cast them away and they fell.

"Where?"

[1] St. Matt. 28. [2] Job 4. [3] Jerem. 2.

Where could they fall except into that outer darkness where the light of His Presence does not shine. In Him is all good, outside of Him there is none. In Him is light, and love, and overflowing joy, all that Angel or man can desire for his happiness. Outside of Him is darkness and intensest misery. Those wretched creatures of His would not have the possession of God which is Heaven; they must suffer then by their own fault the loss of God which is Hell. Bright and beautiful one instant—black and hideous the next; their thrones lost; the doors of Heaven closed against them; the pit of Hell their home for ever—this was what sin, one mortal sin did for them. It was their own doing, not God's. God did not say to them: "Now you shall be changed from Angels into devils," but they were changed instantaneously *by their sin*. Our Lord when He was on earth spoke one day of that fall of theirs. He was God and He had seen it. What did He say? "I saw Satan as lightning falling from Heaven."[1] Think how the lightning flashes from east to west. We say, "Look at that lightning"—too late, it is gone. "How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning."[2]

What ruin sin brought on those glorious beings, ruin worse a thousand times than the wreck of Pompeii and Herculaneum! Everything in them was spoilt, twisted, turned into ugly deformity. They had loved God and all that He loved; now they hated Him and would show their hatred by

[1] St. Luke 10. [2] Isaias 14.

trying to rob Him of all that He prized. Must not sin be a terrible thing, if one sin, a sin of thought, could work such havoc as this!

What do the devils think of sin? They are not sorry for it. But they know it to be the awful thing it is, and in their wicked cruelty they want it to do to us all the harm that it has done to them.

Oh, that the misery sin brings had stopped with the fallen angels! But we know it went further and found its way down to this earth of ours.

Let us carry our thoughts back six thousand years, and see between the Tigris and Euphrates that garden planted by God's own Hand for the new creation of His which was to fill up the ranks of His Angels. It was not so excellent as the first creation, yet it was so noble, so richly gifted by nature and by grace, that David could call it "a little lower than the angels."[1] See our first parents in the "Paradise of Pleasure."[2] God put them there and said to them: "Do what you like—flowers, trees, birds, beasts, I give them all to you. I only want you to keep your hands off that one tree. I am not asking much of you. You will do this for Me. I have done so much for you." Like the Angels, you see, they were put on their trial, that they might have by way of reward the heavenly joys prepared for them. What a slight trial it was, obedience to one command and one so easy to obey! But light and easy as it was, it was

[1] Psalm 8. [2] Genesis 2.

still a command, and they were told that a terrible punishment—death, would follow on disobedience.

What happened we know, and we know, too, what misery this disobedience of theirs brought upon the world and upon all their children. When God made the earth He saw it was very good and He blessed it. Sin, one sin, changed that blessing into a curse. He cursed the green earth, and the thorns and thistles, of which we hear nothing till after the Fall, sprang up in place of the flowers of Paradise. That Paradise of Pleasure where they had lived without a single pain or fear to trouble their gladness and their peace was closed to them. They were turned out into *a valley of tears* where there is sorrow on every side. Wherever we turn we hear of suffering and misery, pain of body, pain of mind, plague, famine, war, shipwrecks, earthquake, hurricanes, partings, sickness, and the end of all—death. These are the temporal evils. Then there are those of the soul. The effects of that sin are lasting now in Hell, and will last for all eternity.

O Adam and Eve, father and mother of us all, what do you think of sin?

Must not sin, one mortal sin, be a terrible thing when it could change the world like this! If I have ever committed a mortal sin, a terrible change came over my soul. The Angels saw it, God saw it—and I laughed and slept as if no dreadful thing had happened. I cannot imagine a murderer laughing or sleeping or having a moment's rest. Day and night his conscience tortures him; he knows he may be caught any moment and put to death as

he deserves. If I have ever been the murderer of my own soul, how could I have a moment's rest! How could I laugh, sleep, play, and enjoy myself when death might catch me any moment and take me—I know where? The weight of one single mortal sin is enough to drag a soul down to Hell. It *must* drag it there unless the Precious Blood comes in time and saves it.

What do those think of sin who think of it in Hell—*too late?*

My God, You put into the heart of Your saints this fear of sin. Put it into mine, that it may keep me from harm as it kept them. I want to serve You out of love. But if ever love should grow cold in my heart, at least let the fear of Your punishments keep me from falling into sin.

VI.

THE FURNACE OF FIRE.

Which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?
(Isaias 33, 14.)

If ever I committed a mortal sin I gained what? An enjoyment that was over directly and left me miserable. I lost what? I lost the friendship of God, so that I was no longer His beloved child. I lost the life of grace. I lost all the merits of my past life that I had acquired in a state of grace, the merit of so many fervent prayers, of so many Communions, of so many efforts to overcome myself. "*I that was formerly so wealthy am all on a sudden broken to pieces.*"[1] I lost the merit of all the good works I did whilst I remained in mortal sin. I lost my right to Heaven.

I lost my right to Heaven—have I ever thought what that means? My place there, my throne among Angels and Saints, my right to all the glorious things of the City of God, its riches, its delights, its company. *My* place, *my* right that was my very own, that I could not lose or forfeit except through my own fault. I lost it, threw it away as something

[1] Job 16.

worthless that I should never miss, exchanged it for another place far away in "*the place of torments*"[1] and for a right to all I should find there. The merits of our Lord, His prayers, His tears, His Blood, I made them useless for me. I lost the fruit of all He did and suffered for my salvation.

Oh, that glad word Salvation! one of the gladdest, if not the gladdest word we know! To be saved? It means rest and peace and joy that has no bound, that has no end. It means love, happiness full and complete, the contentment of every desire. It means the company of Angels and Saints, our brothers and sisters around the Throne of God. It means Mary and Jesus and the unveiled Face of God. All this we say when we say Salvation—to be saved.

And to be saved from what? From a life without God, a life from which God turns away His Face. Surely this must be death. It is. Death is God's name for such a life—"*the second death*,"[2] eternal death. What is death? To lie alone in utter darkness amid all that is vile, loathsome, intolerable. To be cast away from all the sights and sounds of the fair earth that was our home a while ago—above us the green fields, the song of the birds, the voice of those we love, the round of daily life, the little duties and joys and expectations that once were ours—below and around and within us, what is too horrible even for thought. This is the death of the body.

But the death of the soul, *the second death*, is it anything like this? No, for it is something so

[1] St. Luke 16. [2] Apoc. 21.

inconceivably worse that we cannot liken the two together. What follows upon the first death we do not feel—the shame, the separation from the living, the being trodden down and cast away as a thing too vile for sight. All this the body does not feel. But the second death, how different it is, how fearful! Think what the body in the grave would suffer if the soul were there too, if everything were known and felt. Now in the second death the soul *is* in the grave *and the grave is Hell.* It must be so. After death comes burial: the soul dies and is "*buried in Hell.*"[1] Our Lord Himself says so —"the rich man died *and was buried in Hell.*" In that awful grave everything is known, everything is felt—the fire, the darkness, pain so dreadful that nothing worse can be imagined, the company of all the cruel and the bad; more terrible still the gnawing of conscience; most terrible of all, the loss of God.

The *fire.* What is there that we dread more in this world! It is the one pain that is intolerable from the first, the pain which must have tried the martyrs most sorely and called for the omnipotence of God to enable them to bear it. Hold your face near the fire, as near as you can bear—nearer still, or let a spark lie for a second upon your hand.

"Oh, but we couldn't do that you know."

Why not?

"Because we couldn't bear it."

Then what must it be *to have to bear* not the

[1] St. Luke 16.

nearness of fire, not a single spark, but that furnace of fire which our Lord says is never extinguished?

"But is it real fire in Hell?"

The precise nature of the punishment there we cannot tell. But we know that our Lord Himself speaks of the lost as suffering the torment of *fire*. "I am tormented *in this flame*," He makes Dives say.[1] And again, "Everyone shall be salted *with fire*." And, "*the fire is not extinguished*." "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into *unquenchable fire*. And if thy foot scandalize thee, cut if off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting, than having two feet, to be cast into the Hell of *unquenchable fire*."[2] How our Lord dwells on that fearful word! He wants to show us that the love and care for ourselves which springs from ordinary prudence should make us count it a less punishment, a less cruel privation, to break with anything in this life —companions, amusements, things near and dear to us as a hand or foot, than to suffer the torments of the wicked in the life that is to come.

We are prudent in the things of this world. In the autumn of 1898, a heat wave passed over Europe and America, turning temperate climates into tropical. Several cases were reported in the papers of men going mad, and wise people took precautions. We are afraid of the passing effect of the heat of the sun. And the everlasting effects "*of the furnace of fire*" fail to terrify us!

[1] St. Luke 16. [2] St Mark 9.

Darkness too, how afraid we are of that. It does not hurt, we know quite well there is nothing in it to hurt. Yet see the terror of a little child left alone in the dark in a strange place. Hell is quite dark, the flames make no cheerful brightness, as the blaze on our hearths does here. And hidden in that darkness is all that is most terrible. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* tells us that "Hell is a dark and horrible prison, where the souls of the damned, together with the devils, are tormented in inextinguishable fire."

Pain, every kind of pain is there, and all at once, "this place of torments,' the rich man called it. Pain most awful in its severity, no Providence of God as there always is here to prevent its being too bad, no protection from the cruel devils and the wicked people who all hate us. Pain never stopping, quite continuous, without relief, without comfort, without merit. And this for ever.

A little child was seen gazing intently at a dying fire. Thoughtfully, as if speaking to itself, it said, "That is like the fire of Purgatory, going out because all the coals are burnt up." In Hell the coals are never burnt up. This it is that makes that place one of despair. The pain will never come to an end—*never*.

The two thoughts that make Hell what it is are these: It is all my own fault. It is for ever. It is all *my own fault*. I need not have given way to temptation; I might have prayed and resisted. I am lost when I might so easily have been saved. God did all He could for me. He made my place

ready in Heaven, but I would not have it. I made my choice, I chose to come here, and now it is too late.

I am lost *for ever*—if there only were an end, however far off—but my chance is gone; there can be no more change. I am at the beginning of "that night in which nothing can be done"[1]—this must go on *for ever*.

Oh, what do they think of sin in Hell!

How the sight of Hell makes us understand that terrible threat of our Lord to the Jews, a threat repeated three times, *You shall die in your sin*.[2]

Sin and Hell are two things frightfully near together, so near that between them there is only the one step from this world to the next. How should they not be near when they both mean the same thing—separation from God. If the separation goes on up to the last moment of this life, the first moment of the next life is Hell. This is because it is only *here* and *now* that change is possible. The time for choosing and changing is *now*. After death we remain for ever as we were found in the moment of death.

It is hard to understand even in the very least what eternal separation from God is like. Here in this world people can live, laugh, enjoy themselves when they are all the while separated from God. They do not think of it, it does not seem anything so very dreadful. But once they have passed into the next world, what do they find? That separation from God means pain more frightful than any we

[1] Wisdom 17. [2] St. John 8.

have been thinking of, anything we have ever heard of or can imagine.

To understand this we must remember that we can only be happy with God, because we were made for Him, made to be with Him. How children at school long for their home. Would they, could they be happy if they knew they were never to go home? Sanctifying grace, by making us children of God, has given us a right to spend our eternity with our Father Who is in Heaven. Those who through their own fault have lost that right and are never to go to Him there, how can they be anything but utterly miserable? In this world every place that is not home, is not a place of misery. There are plenty of joys outside. In the next world it is not so. Outside the presence of God there is not a single joy, nothing but unutterable misery.

This is because God is all goodness. He is Goodness itself. Out of Him and apart from Him there is no possible goodness. So when some one called our Blessed Lord "Good Master," He answered, "*One is good, God.*"[1]

Whatever excellence, beauty, kindness, loveableness, we see in people and things around us, whatever happiness they bring us, comes from Him. In Him all this good is contained, and those who possess Him possess all good. And therefore when He wants to show us the riches and happiness those shall have who love and serve Him, He says, "*I will be thy reward exceeding great.*"[2] If the throne of a vast kingdom were promised to any

[1] St. Matt. 19. [2] Genesis 15.

one, would not this be a promise of all the good things on which men set their hearts? Glory and honour, gladness, sweetness, love and joy are found in their fulness in God, and those who possess Him have every desire gratified to the full.

But if those who are wise enough to secure God for themselves secure all good with Him, what about those who have wilfully rejected Him? If light and love and happiness is the portion of His saints, what is left to the lost but darkness and hatred and despair! Whose fault is it but their own! God cannot make good apart from Himself; if we will not have Him we cast away all good. And so He lovingly complains: "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."[1] God is as necessary to every soul in the next life as air and water are to us here.

"But if people haven't loved God, will they miss Him so very much?"

Do we miss the air? Can any of us do without it? What was it that made the hundred and forty-six prisoners in the Black Hole of Calcutta mad with despair? What was it they cried for, fought for, trampled each other down to get? Could any of them have tried to do without the air that was their one need? The air was their life; with it all good things would come to them; without it they must perish by a horrible and lingering death. God is the life of the soul. With Him there come to it all other good things. Without Him it can but

[1] Jerem. 2.

drag on for ever that terrible existence which Holy Scripture calls *the second death.*

A lost soul! What a depth of misery there is in those words. Have you ever seen a lost child in a street of one of our large towns? Have you noticed the terror in its face, the agony in its choking sobs, its piteous look as it scans the faces of the passers-by, the hopelessness with which it wanders hither and thither? It is not hurt or ill-used, or hungry or cold—but it is *lost*, and its little heart is breaking. What if it were at the same time famished and cruelly treated! Yet all this is nothing to the misery of a lost soul.

We have seen something of what it has lost. But the loss, compared with which all other losses are as nothing, is *the loss of God.*

This world has seen many sad sights. If we were to ask which are the saddest, many people would say the partings. A priest tells us of one he saw at Liverpool on a steamer belonging to the White Star Line, bound for New York. She was on the point of starting, and the deck was a scene of bustle and excitement. Late luggage was being carried about and stowed in the hold; letter-bags just brought on board were on their way to the mail-room; steam was up; every man at his post. A bell rang, the last good-byes were said, and amid tears, and shouts, and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, visitors were hurried away. With his

hand on the electric bell, the captain stood on the bridge, ready to give the signal to the engine-room.

Suddenly general attention was directed to two youths standing motionless as statues amid the racket and confusion all around. They were brothers. Their young faces told of lives already marked by care and suffering. They had no friends, they were all in all to each other. From childhood they had struggled on together, counting hardship light in each other's company. But the struggle had proved too hard. Times were bad, and in this crowded country they could find no work. In America it was to be had in plenty, the neighbours said. So it was decided that one should go over and earn and save, and the savings should bring the other out, and they would be happy together once more. The separation would not be for long—how often they had told each other that. Yet the thought brought small comfort as the time drew near for them to part.

It had come now. The bell was ringing, ringing, and still they lingered, parting and coming back for another and yet another word; to hear once more the promise that they would write often; that soon, very soon, one would send for the other, and they would have such a fine time of it. People shouted to them, the cable was being loosed, the gangway drawn in. They separated, moved away a few steps, turned for a last look, and—rushed into each other's arms. The warning shouts were unheeded, perhaps unheard, and the words of the

bystanders, and the friendly remonstrances of the captain. A gentle force was needed to part them.

Not the saints only and those who love God, but every soul rushes to Him like this as soon as it leaves the body. Who can describe its agony if it is torn away from Him!

"Will our Lord be sorry too, like the other brother?"

Our Lord's pains are over, He cannot suffer the pain of separation now, but He has gone through it over and over again for every soul that He has lost. He saw and felt all those separations as He lay on His face under the olive-trees, and it was the agony of that sight that forced the Precious Blood from His veins in such abundance that It rained down upon the ground. He struggled to hold fast each soul for which He was going to give His life, but in spite of all He could give for it—His prayer, His tears, His Blood—mortal sin tore it away from Him, mortal sin unrepented of up to the last. The whole of His tender discourse at the Last Supper implies that even the temporal parting with those He loves must be a cause of sadness. How much more an eternal parting!

These pains of which we have been thinking—the pain of sense, as it is called, and the pain of loss—are for all who have committed a mortal sin and die with that sin on their soul. If ever I have committed a mortal sin, I have deserved them, I have deserved Hell. It is as if I said to God:

"I know that by doing this I shall make You very angry with me. I know that You can punish me at once and through all eternity; that I may lose You for ever and all the happiness You have got ready for me. But I don't care. I don't care for displeasing You and losing You for ever. I don't care for losing Heaven. I don't care about Hell. I only care about pleasing myself this minute." What awful words! Shall I not thank God, Who has not taken me at my word and treated me as I deserve; Who has waited for me to be sorry for my sins and given me grace to be sorry? Shall I not hate sin out of love for Him, and serve Him now out of love? Yes, surely. Yet even so let me remember the warning of one of His greatest saints, and pray that if ever through my fault this love should grow cold in my heart, at least the fear of Hell may keep me from falling into sin.

The remembrance of Hell is necessary for us *all*. Our Lord gave it as a warning to His dear Apostles: "I say to you, My friends, be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you Whom you shall fear: fear ye Him Who after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him."[1] St. Paul was afraid. St. Teresa saw the place in Hell where she would have gone had she not corrected a certain fault. If they were to fear, must not we?

St. Philip Neri used to advise beginners to meditate often upon the pains of Hell, saying that

[1] St. Luke 12.

he who does not go down there during life runs great risk of going there after death. Our catechism tells us it is one of the Four Last Things to be ever remembered. Yet how many are there who have never given it one serious thought.

Many people carry about with them the beginning of a disease which will bring them to death at last. All of us have hidden within our souls the bad passion which, if not checked in time, will bring us to eternal death. The devil sees it *in me*. He sees the spot where my danger lies. His hope is there. If only he can get me to be careless about it, I may come some day to commit mortal sin and so die—*and then!*

Must I not dread sin then which may bring me to Hell. Must I not take heed lest I fall. I cannot fall without knowing it, break God's commandments without knowing it, commit mortal sin without saying to myself, "This is a mortal sin which I am committing."

"My God, give me that fear and that love which will keep me safe always, that I may escape Hell and spend my eternity with You in Heaven."

The fires that leap up from Vesuvius and the Andes and hurl down ruin on the fair country all around, speak to us plainly of the violent disturbance going on always beneath our feet. So do the fires of Hell help us to understand in some degree the fearful work done by mortal sin.

"I don't think anything could teach us better."

Yes, one thing can. There is another sight that

tells us more about the evil of sin than even Hell can do.

Forget the earth's burning mountains and climb this quiet hill outside Jerusalem. Roman soldiers and priests and Pharisees, executioners and sight-seers have gone away. The white Form has been lowered and lies on the ground, the Head upon the Mother's knee. She is looking at the deep, bleeding holes in the forehead, at the glazed eyes, the cheeks defiled and bruised, the limbs not broken indeed, but out of joint, and seamed and scarred all over with the marks of the scourge.

O Mother of Sorrows, what did you think of sin, *of my sin*, as you saw its work on Him!

This is what sin has done. *This* is what sin deserves. Because the punishment of my sin was upon Him, He had to suffer like this! The Eternal Father did not think this too much; He Himself did not think it too much. Yet He is the Well-Beloved of the Father, "*Who did no sin.*"[1] If the Innocent One had to suffer as He has suffered, what does the guilty one deserve? "*If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*"[2]

Here we may stay, for we can go no further. There is no higher school where we may go to learn. We have climbed up into Heaven, we have gone down into Hell to learn something of the evil of sin. And now we come back to our own green

[1] 1 St. Peter 2. [2] St. Luke 23.

earth, and at Mary's knee on Calvary we fall down and see what she has to show us. She lifts the Hands and we see the wide wounds on which He has hung for three hours. We pass from wound to wound and see how "*from the sole of His Foot to the crown of His Head there is no soundness in Him.*"[1] We look and we learn.

O Jesus crucified, teach us here on Calvary the lesson all the saints have come here to learn—what sin must be to have brought You to this; what its ingratitude must be to despise such love as this, to offend a God Who could pay for us a price like this, Who could love us *even to the death of the cross.*[2]

One evening three young men strolled into a church in Paris "to have some fun." It was Holy Week, and there were crowds round the confessionals. Here was an opportunity. One of them should pretend to go to confession; it would be such a good joke. He should wait his turn, go into the confessional and say: "I have cursed God and will do so again. I have given up all religion and I don't care a straw whether I go to Hell or not." Then when the horrified priest had had his say, the "penitent" should come out and on their way home relate his adventure for the amusement of the others. He waited by the confessional, went in and began his accusation. To his surprise the priest did not stop him. He went on. The priest listened quietly to the end. Then, moved, as we may well believe, by a special inspiration from God, he said:

[1] Isaias 1. [2] Philipp. 2.

"For your penance you will get a crucifix, kneel down before it and say: 'He hung there bleeding to death for me—*and I don't care a straw for Him.* He loved me even to the death of the Cross—*and I don't care a straw for Him.* He died to save me from Hell—*and I don't care a straw for Him.*'"

Loud was the laughter when the young fellow rejoined his companions and told his story. But the joke must be carried out to the end. He had his penance to say, and they would see that he said it. They got a crucifix and made him kneel down. He took it into his hands, and with his eyes on the outstretched Form, began: "He loved me even to the death of the Cross, and I——" He stopped. His companions looked at him inquiringly. His face was hidden in his hands. Presently there came a cry, broken by sobs: "*And I will never sin against Him again.*" He rose from his knees, rushed out of the house, and never stopped till he reached the church. There he knelt again in the confessional, this time a true penitent.

Yes, the crucifix teaches us what sin is. It killed, it murdered the Son of God. Can we ever hate it enough! "*Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent,*" Holy Scripture tells us. Sin is our one enemy, our single misery on earth. Sickness, pain, the death of those we love, all things which we call evils, are not so if taken rightly. Sin is the only real evil. Now we know it better, we can understand that constant cry of St. Philip: "Only let there be no sin, only let there be no sin!"

And now what about myself in the future? What difference is all this going to make *to me?* It is no use for me to say in a hurry, "Why of course, I am never going to commit a mortal sin, and now what next?" I must stop to ask myself, "Have I really a horror of mortal sin? And am I quite determined, with God's help, that I will never so much as deliberate as to committing a mortal sin, that is, never consider in my mind whether I will do it or not, weighing the 'fors' and 'againsts.' God forbids me to deliberate in this way. When temptation comes and He says to me, '*Thou shalt not,*' I am to say to myself quickly as if echoing His word, '*Thou shalt not.*' I am to put the thought from me at once, briskly, boldly, no matter what the cost may be. I may have to give up that pleasure, to bear that pain. I must give up that pleasure, I must bear that pain."

If we want to see how thoroughly this was understood by English Catholics three hundred years ago, we have only to turn to the records of persecutions which have come down to us from Queen Elizabeth's time. They give us the very words used by brave men and women, when they were brought up before the Lord Mayor, and made to tell their reasons for not going to the Queen's church, and hearing sermons against their religion. Perhaps we should have said women and men, for it is wonderful how well the women come out as confessors of the Faith. Let us remember as we read their touching answers that they were people like ourselves, with the same fear of pain, imprison-

ment and death as we have. Many were very poor and had homes, and husbands, and little children to care for. They knew perfectly well that their refusal to observe the Queen's laws would bring upon them heavy fines, and then imprisonment in places where the sufferings were worse than death. Yet do we find in their words any sign of deliberating about committing a mortal sin? Let us see.

'Elizabeth Portar, widow, sayeth she cometh not to the church, because that the service there is not as it ought to be, nor as it has been heretofore."

"Margaret Taylor, sayeth she cometh not to the church, because there is not a priest as there ought to be, and also that there is not the Sacrament of the Altar."

"William Bowman, locksmith, sayeth he refuseth to come to church because he thinketh it is not the Catholic church, for there is neither priest, altar, nor sacraments."

"Isabel Addewell, widow, sayeth she cometh not to the church because her conscience will not serve her, and that she hath little or nothing to live upon." She said this because these poor people were made to tell how much they were worth in worldly goods. If they had not enough to pay the fine their furniture was carried off, and even the tools with which they earned their livelihood.

"Isabel Portar, wife of Peter Portar, tailor, sayeth that she cometh not to church because her conscience will not serve her, for things are not in

the church as it hath been aforetimes in her forefathers' days."

Here is a felt-maker and his wife:

"Gregory Wilkinson and his wife Agnes, say they come not to church because their conscience will not serve them so to do, for they will remain in the faith that they were baptized in."

And here are two servants to George Hall, draper:

"Jane West, sayeth she cometh not to the church, for she thinketh it is not the right church, and that if she should come there it would damn her soul."

"Anne Boyes, sayeth she cometh not to the church for her conscience will not serve, because there is neither altar, sacrifice, nor the priest."

"Elizabeth Awdecorne cometh not to the church, because she sayeth she should displease God if she should do otherwise."

"Margaret Hewett sayeth she cometh not to the church, for if she should she thinketh she should offend God, and therefore her conscience will not suffer her to come there."[1]

Did ever saints and martyrs confess their faith more bravely! Widows, servants, poor tradespeople, taken suddenly out of their quiet homes, have to choose between a mortal sin, and the loss of all they have in the world. And see how simply they act. What is against their conscience, what will offend God and damn their souls, they fling

[1] Father Morris, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, vol. iii.

from them resolutely. As to the consequences they are ready for them:

> Let sorrow come and pain and every ill,
> All are worth while.

We sing these words in church. Why? Not surely for the sake of singing them, but to bring home to ourselves that we too must be ready to do and to bear when our own trial comes.

"But we shall never have to confess our faith like that!"

Who knows? Who would have suspected there would be martyrs in Paris a few years ago! And whether we have to confess it like that or in some other way, what does it matter! If we are going to live in the midst of our fellow-countrymen, we shall most certainly have to confess our faith in some way. Nay, if we go and live in the wilds of Africa we shall have to confess our faith. For temptation follows us everywhere, and everywhere we have to resist and stand firmly on God's side. What is this but confessing our faith? We may not have to suffer as our forefathers suffered—loss of all we have in this world, imprisonment, death. But if we are to keep clear of sin and serve God faithfully, we shall certainly have to suffer something. Are we ready?

"I wonder how those brave men and women of Yorkshire got themselves ready?"

Oh, come now! here is a question worth answering; we do not get such every day. I was beginning to think we were rather sleepy, but this

makes up for a long silence. *How* to do what *has* to be done is always a sensible inquiry. To find the answer in this case we shall have to go a little bit out of our way, but no matter. We may as well learn at this early stage what cannot be learned too soon.

Look now into your minds and see what happens when the thought first comes to you of doing something difficult—going in for an examination, or saving up money for a holiday-outing. Do you decide at once? No. You sit as judge upon the case and hear it out. You turn the matter over this way and that, examine it on every side, weigh the "fors" and "againsts." Is the step a wise one? Is it useful, worth the cost? Will you be the happier for taking it? If the answer is "Yes" each time, your mind becomes convinced that the right thing to do is to take the step, and a resolution begins to take shape in your will. At last the decision comes. You *will* save up money for that outing, or you *will* go in for that examination. What trouble you have been taking here! Before you could make up your mind, that is, come to a resolution, the three powers of your soul had to prepare the way. The memory recalled the facts, the understanding examined them, and at last the will gave the decision.

The same thing happens in matters that concern the soul. The same process must be gone through. Strong resolutions are not formed all at once, because the strong reasons out of which they are made do not strike our minds all at once, or

convince and persuade them without labour on our part. We must think, we must hear the case out, turn it over and examine it on every side, and this not once only, but many times.

Deep impressions on our mind are not made all at once, but they are made at last. At last the truth stands out clearly; our mind is convinced; it sees distinctly what it ought to do. *Now* the will is ready; *now* the strong resolution is formed, and with God's grace, which is never wanting, it will be kept. Grace has been working with us all the time, enlightening our mind and strengthening our will—*helping*, for this is its work. God will not do it all Himself. He helps those who help themselves.

See, then, how necessary it is for us to think seriously about the things that concern our soul. All who are now in Heaven have thought seriously, and resolved earnestly, and so have saved their souls. All who are in Hell said it was too much trouble to think. They made weak resolutions or no resolutions at all, and when temptation to mortal sin came, they gave way and were lost. Oh, that we could be thoroughly interested in our souls! If we could know their worth as He does Who made them, we should be willing to take any trouble for their sakes.

Resolutions that come of serious thought are not easily shaken, they become part of ourselves as it were, and when occasions offer they are carried out briskly, bravely, perseveringly. The simple folk of the old Catholic days were soaked through and

through with the truths on which we have been thinking, and so when their trial came they were ready to meet it. This lesson then they teach us —*we must think* and we must take the trouble that thinking costs. No success in this world has ever been gained except by serious thought. Ask Admiral Togo, ask Kubelik, and they will tell you it is and must be so. All those who mean to serve God faithfully must learn to think seriously. It is not enough to swallow these great truths whole, we must digest them, or they will do us no good: *If I have only one soul, I must save it at all costs. If Hell is the punishment of mortal sin, then I must be very much afraid of mortal sin, I must hate it with all my might.*

A mother and her little boy were walking over a bridge in York where in the persecuting times a frightful prison had stood. She told him how in that prison the blessed martyr, Margaret Clitheroe, had suffered death for holding fast to the ancient Faith of England. How heavy weights had been heaped upon her as she lay on the floor with a sharp stone under her back; and how after a quarter of an hour of fearful pain, she was freed for ever from all pain and passed from that torture-chamber into the brightness of Heaven, to see the smile on the Lips of our Blessed Lord and hear Him say, "Well done!"

A fortnight after, the mother and the little boy were on the bridge again. When they came to the place where the prison had stood, he looked up into her face, and said, earnestly: "Mother, I

hope I shall always be a good Catholic." His mind had been working, you see, on what he had heard, and here was the result.

"I wish I were like all these people. I mean I wish I were quite interested in my soul, quite in earnest about saving it. It seems very dreadful to say it, but I don't think I am *quite*."

You are on the right road any way, for you have a good will and desire. God will give anything and everything where He sees these. Promise Him to do your part, and prove your good-will now by taking a little trouble. Let the thoughts we are thinking over together sink into your heart. Give them a chance. Think about them sometimes by yourself, like the little boy on the bridge. Above all, pray to God to keep in your heart always a great fear of displeasing Him:

My God, so fill my heart with Your love that I may never even deliberate about offending You by mortal sin. But if ever through my fault this love should grow cold in my heart, at least let the fear of Hell keep me from falling into sin.

VII.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little. (Ecclus. 19, 1.)

We have had a dull chapter, and no wonder. How can anything about sin help being dull? But sad to say, we have not done with it yet. Right notions about sin are so necessary for us that we must not hurry away too soon from this disagreeable subject. It is like a bit of dismal country that has to be got over before we can reach the bright fields lying in the sunshine beyond. We have to get our minds soaked through and through with the thought that sin is something detestable, a thing to be hated and feared and shunned as we should shun the face of a serpent—*all* sin, venial as well as mortal.

We have seen reason enough for hating *mortal sin*, and for being resolved never to commit it for the love or fear of anything whatsoever. But the Church bids us go further. She tells us to be willing to lose anything, to suffer anything, rather than commit *venial sin*. She teaches us that mortal sin is a *grave* transgression of God's law, venial sin a *comparatively* light transgression of the same law.

Notice the word *comparatively*. No offence against God can be a thing of light account, it can be called light only as compared with what is more serious still. Since, therefore, mortal and venial sin are both transgressions of God's law and an insult and injury to His Divine Majesty, we are to hate them both—hate them for their boldness in rising up against God; for their injustice and their ingratitude; for the punishment they deserve; for the sufferings of our Lord which they caused; and because they offend God Who is infinitely good.

Next to mortal sin, venial sin is the greatest evil in the world, and not for anything in the world can we commit it. "We may not sin, though it were to save our lives," the Council of Trent tells us. Not to free all the souls in Hell or in Purgatory would it be right to speak injuriously of God or to tell a deliberate lie. Does this seem strange, a little hard even? It is not really so. What happened to the wasp that settled on your plate this morning? It was not thinking about you at all, but about that plum. Yet, *lest it should hurt you*, down came the knife and its life was taken. No one thought this cruel. It seemed better that little creature should lose all it had than that you should be hurt. Now all the men and women in the world are in some sense less compared with God than a wasp is compared to you. It would be better that any evil should happen to them than that God should be offended.

"It is so, I know. It must be so—and still it is hard to see."

Then we must *believe* and *have patience.*

Here is a November morning, and I am groping my way home. The stuff around me is daylight, I suppose, yet there is no seeing half a yard ahead. It is a really fine specimen of a London fog. There is a pillar-post at this corner, and my home lies just across the road. Of that I am perfectly certain. Yet I can see neither pillar nor house. Why? Because it is November. I must not expect to see to-day. I have to act to-day upon what I *know;* to-morrow I shall *see.*

It is the same at class when facts are brought before me which I cannot grasp. I accept them, I know my mind will grow to them by-and-bye, and be able to take them in; meanwhile I must believe. To doubt or to quarrel with the facts because I cannot see them this minute would be too silly for anything.

So it is with the things of eternity. St. Paul says: "*We see now in a dark manner, but then face to face.*"[1] The moment this life is over I shall be out of the fog; and as I look upon our Lord face to face in His beauty and His glory, the hatefulness of sin, even the least sin, will be so clear to me that I shall wonder it was ever hard to see.

We know what God thinks of venial sin by the punishments He has inflicted on those who were very dear to Him, as Moses and David. For striking the rock twice, a sin of doubt, Moses was shut out of the Promised Land. And he had so longed to see it, to take the people in; he had been

[1] 1 Cor. 13.

looking forward to this for forty years. For a sin of vanity in numbering his people, David lost seventy thousand by pestilence.

This was long ago, but God's hatred of sin is the same now. We have only to look down into Purgatory to see what He thinks of sin at this hour. His dear children suffering there have not the faintest trace of guilt upon their souls. All disappeared in their act of intense contrition and love when they saw Him at Judgment. Yet He will not have them with Him till all the punishment their sins have deserved has been borne, all their debt paid to the last farthing. How God must hate sin!

What do the saints think of venial sins? It is hard for us to understand how St. Aloysius could have fainted away as he confessed his venial sins, which were so few and what we should call very little things. But he realized what man is as compared with God, and we do not.

If only we could feel something of what the saints feel about sin! The way to do this is to think seriously, as they did, about two things—Who He is Whom sin offends; who we are who dare to offend the great God of Heaven.

When we look up into the skies at night we see here and there patches of blurred light, as if the stars just there had run into each other. A powerful telescope would show us that these shining masses are made up of myriads of suns, suspended in space at immeasurable distances from each other, and so far away from us that their light is blended into

a dim radiance and looks like a bright path across the heavens. What an idea this gives us of the vastness of creation, and of the Creator Who made these suns and perhaps innumerable worlds revolving round them—with a word!

And all these worlds, less to Him by far than grains of sand, God holds in the hollow of His Hand. Our world is only another such grain, immensely smaller. What, then, must I be in His sight? And I have dared to sin! How can I think of any sin as a little thing that does not matter much, when it offends a God like this!

God knows Himself, therefore He hates sin as He does. If I knew Him as I shall know Him some day, I should hate sin, all sin, and not for anything in the world should I consent to offend Him.

Thoughts such as these, like water falling on a stone, will make a mark at last. Not all at once—to the saints it did not come all at once—but little by little there will grow up in our soul that holy fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom. The prayers of the Church, like the pages of Holy Scripture, are full of this thought, the holy fear of God. It never seems to come amiss to her. Not even on that bright Feast in November when she takes us right into Heaven. After the Lesson, in which she shows us the hundred and forty-four thousand standing before the Throne with palms in their hands, and the Gospel in which we hear of the reward promised to the clean of heart, the poor in spirit, the mourners, we come in the Gradual to the startling words: "*Fear the Lord,*

all ye His saints."[1] Yes, for there is a joyous filial fear even in Heaven, even in Angels and Saints, who know they are safe for ever. It comes out of the intensity of their reverence. Angels cover their faces with their wings, and saints fall down on their faces before God, and say: "Holy, holy, holy." Can it be safe for those who are not yet saved and not yet saints to be without holy fear?

But it is time to notice this about venial sin—that there are two kinds, very different in God's sight. We will look at each of them.

Yesterday morning when you were blamed for being late for class, you turned hotly round and answered back. When you were asked just now whether you drew a man in the book your father lent you, you were frightened and said, "No," almost before you knew what you were about—these are examples of one kind of venial sin.

Knowing quite well what you were about this morning at Mass, you let your thoughts run all the time on the fun you are going to have to-night. You have coolly made up your mind to pay so and so off, for the ill-turn he did you the other day. These are examples of the other kind.

Now which were worse—the venial sins of surprise, or those in which you deliberately made up your mind to do what was wrong? The last of course. From the first kind even holy people are not altogether free; the others all can avoid,

[1] Psalm 33.

with the help of God's grace. The first do not displease God much, for He knows how weak we are. But the others are more sad and more dangerous. They are sad because they grieve the heart of our Heavenly Father, and they are dangerous because of their consequences to our own soul. Let us look at some of the effects of venial sin, there is nothing like studying the effects of an act if we want to know what to think of it. To understand something of the badness of mortal sin, we thought of the mischief that it does, of the loss of all our good works, and of the punishment of Hell. In the same way we may come to understand something of the evil of venial sin, by seeing the harm that comes of it, more especially of the worse sort, which is committing venial sins with full deliberation. Venial sins do not make us lose the grace of God, do not make us "out of friends" with Him. But they really offend Him, cool our love for Him, and make it more difficult for us to turn to Him trustfully in all our needs. And—can we wonder at it—they make Him less ready to give us the plentiful graces He has in store for His loving and faithful children.

A father has two boys. One tries to please him in everything. His thought is not, "Will father be angry if I do this?" but, "Will this grieve or annoy him?"

"I know he won't like this," says the other, "but he won't turn me out of doors for doing it—so here goes." Which of these two will the father love most? Which will get the best presents when

birthdays come round? Here we have the explanation of the favours granted to the saints. St. Aloysius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, St. Catherine, got presents from God which take away our breath when we read about them—such joy in His service, such peace of heart, such loving visits and tender words—gifts and privileges of which we know nothing. Why? Well, for this reason amongst others, that we are not the good children whom our Father *can* reward in this magnificent way; we don't give Him the chance.

Venial sins do not take away all our good works like mortal sin, but they lessen their merit. They spoil them, Holy Scripture tells us, as "dying flies spoil the sweetness of ointment."[1] They make prayer hard, prevent the sacraments from helping us as they would otherwise do, and so hinder the increase of grace in this life, and of glory in the next. And they prepare for us most grievous pains in Purgatory. Worse still, they pave the way to mortal sin. Let us see how.

Venial sin does not kill the soul like mortal sin, but it disfigures it, makes it sick and weak, and more likely to give way to a strong temptation. Just as the influenza does not kill at once like the plague, but so weakens a man that his strength gives way when an attack of illness comes.

I don't mind having my face disfigured by small-pox provided I don't die. Do we ever hear people saying that? Venial sin disfigures the soul in God's sight more than small-pox disfigures the

[1] Eccles. 10.

body. He Himself likens sin to leprosy. And what is that?

Father Damien who lived with it for twenty-five years will tell us. "Discoloured patches appear on the skin, especially on the cheeks, and the parts affected lose their feeling. After a time this discolouration covers the whole body; then ulcers begin to open, chiefly at the extremities. The flesh is eaten away, and gives out a fetid odour; even the breath of the leper becomes so foul that the air around is poisoned with it."

How terrified a poor father or mother must be when these signs begin to appear in the child they love—the discoloured patch on the cheek, the loss of feeling in hand or foot! The child does not notice them perhaps; it laughs and plays, and cannot be brought to see there is any danger. And meantime, day after day, week after week, the dreadful disease is creeping over it, and death is coming nearer.

If venial sin made an ugly patch on our cheek, oh, then we should be afraid. We should be careful then. We should carefully examine our conscience to see if any dangerous symptoms were showing themselves.

But because the leper spots are not seen, we do not care. Where is our faith? Where is that greater care of the soul than of the poor perishing body?

Yes, small faults if unchecked may lead to great sins, and the saints tell us that in one sense they are more dangerous. Great sins startle us, but little

ones do not. Wilful distractions at prayer, little lies, unkind words and acts—we get a habit of committing these, we grow accustomed to them. And all the while there is the warning of the Holy Ghost: "*He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.*"[1] This is because the devil is watching us whilst we are so unwatchful and unwary. When he has got the better of us in small things, and sees our horror of sin growing less and our will getting weak, he grows bolder and attacks us in greater things. He is like a thief who tries to get his foot into the door that he may squeeze himself in presently.

Every one knows that the sportsman must aim higher than the bird he means to bring down. So those who mean to keep out of mortal sin must aim higher, or they will not keep out of it. The danger of venial sin consists in this, that it accustoms us to disobedience and to a very dangerous freedom. To say, "Of course I would never commit a mortal sin, but I'm not going to bother about venial," is like saying, "I will run half-way down this steep hill, only half-way. I shall stop long before I get to the cliff at the bottom." *Will* you stop? Will you be able to hold yourself back? But it is no use giving examples like this. We take very good care not to be silly where the body is concerned, it is only with our soul we can afford to run risks.

The pains of Purgatory are for a time only. But what pains, and for what a time! Many believe that fire is the punishment even of venial sin, and

[1] Ecclus. 19.

that it may last for months and years, for some until the Judgment Day. Of these pains, the long separation from God will be the worst.

> When then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
> The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
> All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
> Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,
> And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,
> That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself
> At disadvantage such, as to be used
> So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
> There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
> Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee,
> And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though
> Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinn'd,
> As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
> To slink away, and hide thee from His sight,
> And yet wilt have a longing, aye to dwell
> Within the beauty of His countenance.
> And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—
> The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
> The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
> Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.[1]

Is there no escape then? Not altogether perhaps, but we may do much. "It were better for thee to fear sin than to be afraid of Hell," says the *Imitation of Christ*. And the same may be said of Purgatory. Those who fear venial sin, and try to avoid it, and who do here in this world some of the punishment their sins deserve—they will not have a long Purgatory.

Why should we not be wise in time—see things now as we shall see them very soon? There are foolish men and women nowadays, aye, and boys

[1] Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

and girls too, who think it fine to make light of sin. They laugh at those who are afraid of it; they call them scrupulous and silly. Let them laugh, it will not be for long. Look just behind that curtain of death which hides from us the things of eternity. Waiting there for the Judgment Day, are the millions and millions who have had their trial in this life, and now have passed into the next. All the people in the world are nothing compared to the vast multitudes waiting there. Now if we ask them all what is the thing to be most dreaded in this world and the next, the answer comes as from one voice: "*Sin.*" Not, to be ugly, to be dull; not, to be poor and cold and hungry; to be in pain, to be thought little of, to be unkindly treated—none of the things we are so frightened of in this life, but —to have offended God by sin. We shall be standing there with them directly, knowing this as well as they do, but it will be too late to make use of our knowledge then. Thank God it is not too late now.

Just think how terrible it would be if we did not know anything about the punishments of the next life until we got there! And yet does the knowing make much difference to some of us? Oh, what are we doing, what are we doing to be so careless with the immortal soul which is our only one! God tells us about Hell and Purgatory that we may be wise now, and guard ourselves whilst there is time.

In olden days a castle was often surrounded by a wall, sometimes by two, so that if the outer one was scaled by the enemy, there would still be the protection of the other. Our soul is a fortress

guarded by a double wall. One is the firm resolution to suffer anything rather than so much as deliberate about committing a mortal sin. We are bound to have this rampart round our soul. But to be safer still we should have a second—the resolution to suffer anything rather than deliberate about committing a venial sin. You remember what to deliberate means—to consider in our minds whether we will do a thing or not, saying to ourselves, "Perhaps I will if it seems worth while." Those who have the second wall round their fortress do not deliberate at all even about committing a venial sin—the moment they see a thing is wrong and would offend God, they will have nothing to do with it. Such as these are very dear to God and very safe.

When the Jews, released from captivity by Cyrus, returned to their own land, they found the walls of Jerusalem in a sad state—weak and tottering all round, and broken down in so many places, that the city was exposed in every direction to the attacks of their enemies. After a while Nehemias, the cup-bearer of Artexerxes, King of Persia, arrived with a commission to rebuild the walls. He assembled the people, pointed out to them the unprotected state of the Holy City, and urged them to see to its defences without delay. Roused to the sense of their danger, they set to work at once, and the rebuilding of the walls became the one thought, the one subject of conversation in Jerusalem.

Now notice what happened. Their enemies became furious and tried by fair means and foul to stop the builders. Nehemias tells us the story, and it is worth following carefully, for it is very interesting:

"When they heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up and the breaches began to be closed, they were exceedingly angry. And they all assembled themselves together to come and to fight against Jerusalem. And we prayed to our God, and set watchmen before the walls day and night against them. . . . And our enemies said: Let them not know till we come in the midst of them and cause the work to cease."

See how frightened they were; they knew they had no chance if that wall got built.

"And we returned all of us to the walls, every man to his work. And half of the young men did the work, and half were ready to fight with spears, and shields, and bows, and coats of mail. . . . Of them that built on the wall . . . with one of his hands he did the work, and with the other he held a sword. And I said to the nobles and to the magistrates, and to the rest of the common people: The work is great and wide and we are separated on the wall one far from the other: In what place soever you shall hear the trumpet, run all thither unto us: our God will fight for us. And let us do the work: and let one half of us hold our spears from the rising of the morning until the stars appear . . . and let us take our turns in the night and by day to work. . . . Moreover I built in the

work of the wall, and all my servants were gathered together to the work. . . . And when our enemies heard that I built the wall, and that there was no breach left in it, they sent to me saying: Come and let us make a league together. . . . But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers to them saying: I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down lest it be neglected. . . . And they sent to me four times, and I answered after the same manner. . . . For all these men thought to frighten us, thinking that our hands would cease from the work, and that we would leave off. Wherefore I strengthened my hands the more. . . . But the wall was finished in two and fifty days. And it came to pass when all our enemies heard of it, that all nations which were round about were afraid and were cast down within themselves, for they perceived that this was the work of God."[1]

Yes, the strengthening of the City of God, by building up its walls and repairing its breaches, is the *work of God*. But it is ours too. He helps those who help themselves. But we must do our part and do it diligently. We notice with surprise that until they were roused up by Nehemias, the Jews were not alive to the importance of putting their city into a state of defence. It seems incomprehensible—yet so it was. With enemies all round, they were content to go on from day to day in the midst of walls which showed great gaping breaches on every side. Their enemies

[1] 2 Esdras 4.

might well leave them alone. They knew that at any moment they could go up, make a slaughter, and carry off spoils. It was their business then to keep all quiet, to prevent alarms, so that when the time was come they might enter easily.

So it is with our enemies. When our defences are broken down on every side, and there is not even the first wall—fear of mortal sin, left standing, then the devils keep quiet; they do not want us to be alarmed; they cannot bear any one to warn us of our danger. Cunningly and securely they make their plans and get ready a great big temptation to mortal sin, and some day when as usual we are off our guard, they hurl it upon us. . . . The holy Angels do just the contrary. When they see us in this dangerous state, caring nothing for venial sin, and drawing every day nearer to mortal—they sound the note of alarm like Nehemias. He did all he could to rouse his people. He gave them no peace till the strong wall stood between them and their enemy. And because he knew that it is the weak spots which are stormed, he kept calling attention to the breaches. *In the hour of attack* the trumpet was to call the forces together to the weak places. But *before the attack* these places were to be looked to and strengthened.

This is the lesson we have to learn from him. The wall that stands between us and our enemy is horror of *all* sin, venial as well as mortal. Let this wall be neglected, and sooner or later our city will be taken—there will be mortal sin. If we think little of venial sins, of those to which we are

most inclined, saying, "Oh, they are only venial sins," we are widening the breaches in our wall, we are in great danger and need a Nehemias to frighten us into our senses before it is too late.

We have to guard our wall *vigorously*, with *spears and shields and bows and coats of mail*—watchfulness and prayer, and all our spiritual weapons of attack and defence. We have to guard it *diligently*, all our *servants gathered together to the work*—eye and ear, memory, understanding, will, all on the alert. We have to guard it *constantly from the rising of the morning till the stars appear.* No being caught by the enemy's soft words when he says, "*Come and let us make a league together;* do like other people, enjoy yourself, don't be so afraid of little things." He thinks *to do me mischief* when he talks like this, and I must *strengthen my hands the more*, and answer with Nehemias: "*I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down lest it be neglected.*"

Above all, we must watch the weak places in our souls—our daily examination of conscience will point them out—and when they are in danger muster all our forces—a strong will helped by the grace of God—for the defence. When *you shall hear the trumpet*, conscience giving the alarm, run *all thither unto us. Our God will fight for us.*

Some one perhaps will say: "Of course it is all true about the Jews and how they defended their wall. But what they did was so long ago, that it doesn't seem to matter much to us."

We will look nearer home then, and see what is thought about breaches in a wall, by people of our own age, living in a country close by.

You know that, in one sense at least, the sea is the great enemy of Holland. It has to be kept off the land by main force, and untiring watchfulness is needed in repairing the walls of sand and earth called dykes that protect the country. The sea is always pressing against the dykes, and at times when violent gales sweep the Atlantic waters into the North Sea and pile them against the Dutch coast, the pressure is so strong that the dykes are taxed beyond their strength and give way. What a fearful scene the country then presents! Well, country we must not call it, for the waters have rushed in and changed it into a wide-spreading sea. Towns and villages are buried beneath the waves. Men, women, and children, horses, oxen and sheep, are seen struggling and drowning in every direction, just as they did in the old Flood. The poor people climb into the trees and even up the steeples of churches, and there cry out for help. Hundreds of cities and villages have been destroyed by these terrible floods, and hundreds of thousands of human lives. No wonder that in Holland they fear the sea, no wonder that the state of the dykes is a cause of constant anxiety, and that every care is taken to prevent accidents. Weak or threatened places are closely watched. At the least sign of danger, the least crack or hole, the alarm is given, and engineers and workmen are on the spot.

"The least crack or hole! Why, what harm can such a little wee thing as that do?"

You are no Dutch child, that is plain, or you would never make a speech like that. Every child in Holland knows it is just the wee holes from which all the mischief comes; if they are prevented or quickly stopped, there is nothing to fear.

A little boy was going home from school one evening, when he saw a tiny stream of water trickling through a hole in one of the dykes. He did not say as a thoughtless child might have done, "What can such a wee hole as that matter?" A leak in the dykes meant terrible things to him. He knew that small holes with the big strong ocean behind them are not things to be trifled with. They must be stopped at the cost of convenience, comfort, everything. How was he to stop this hole? "If I run home for father he may be out, or it may be dark before he can come and we may not be able to find the hole again. Or it may get so large whilst I am away that the sea may thrust through and break down the wall. No, I must stay here," he thought, "and do what I can alone."

Down he sat by the hole and put his hand into it to keep back the water. He cried for help, but no one came, for it was a lonely place and no one passed that way. Hour after hour he sat there in the dark and the cold. Hour after hour he heard the chimes from the churches this side and that. Would the night never end, would the morning ever come! He was hungry and tired, and oh, so cold, the hand in the hole was quite blue and dead,

his feet were like ice, and what strange aching pains were creeping all over him! But he never thought of abandoning his post. At any cost, the cost even of life, that dangerous hole must be stopped.

At last the morning broke, the grey dawn came slowly up the sky, and a man going whistling to his work passed that way. He thought he heard a cry and turned sharp round. The boy was calling, faintly now, for he was very ill and could hardly speak. Another moment and the man was at his side, the poor little fellow was freed. Then and there the hole was stopped, and the boy was carried home to his mother. Help had come at last, and his home and his country, with thousands of human lives, were saved, thanks to that brave child.

Shall we ever say again, what does a little fault matter?

The enemies of our soul, the devil, the world, and the flesh, rage like an angry ocean round our soul, always seeking a weak spot for attack. Its ramparts, its dykes on which its safety depends, are the will. If that is safe, all is safe. If that is guarded we need fear nothing. How are we to guard it? Our Lord tells us—by watchfulness and prayer: "*Watch and pray*"—just what the little boy did. He guarded the dangerous spot, he called out for help. So shall *we* save the land.

Just another word. Two things will keep us from sin, a bold heart and a tender conscience; a bold heart to say, "No, it is wrong and I won't do

it," when the temptation to sin comes, and a tender conscience to feel even the least touch of temptation.

"How can our conscience be tender? I thought tender meant kind, soft?"

It does—delicate, sensitive, feeling things quickly and acutely, whether they please or pain. The great harm of making light of our sins is that this blunts the conscience so that it does not feel the shock of pain it once felt at the thought of sin. This pain shows the soul is in a good healthy state. Not to be pained by things which ought to cause pain, is a bad sign, "a dangerous symptom," the doctors call it.

When Father Damien, the apostle of the lepers, determined to spend his life in the leper settlement, Molokai, he knew that, unless preserved by a miracle, he must expect sooner or later to catch the frightful disease and die, for leprosy is highly contagious.

But time passed, and still no signs appeared. None but this. His sense of smell grew less acute. At first he was obliged to leave the leper huts constantly and run outside to breathe the fresh air. But by degrees the poisonous atmosphere became less offensive, and at last it caused him no distress at all.

"That was a good thing anyhow."

The doctors did not think so, and shook their heads when they heard it, for one of the first symptoms of the disease is a loss of feeling in the

part attacked. Almost every day the poor leper finds a numbness in some fresh joint or limb. And so the doctors shook their heads. But Father Damien's own discovery of his state was not made till he had lived among the lepers thirteen years. It came about in this way. Feeling unwell one day, he thought a hot foot-bath would do him good. The steam rose from the water, but he put his feet in. They were scalded as he could *see*. But only his eyes told him of the fact, there was no pain. He dipped his finger in and drew it back instantly. The water was boiling. At once the truth flashed upon him—he was a leper! The feet were too much numbed to feel. Mortification or death had set in, and what the sound member felt intensely and shrank from, the dead member could bear without pain.

Oh, how often the conscience is roused by a shock like this. Carelessness about venial sin has been going on for a long time, the soul gets dulled, the will grows weaker and weaker. At last a strong temptation comes, and—there is mortal sin. Of course the three things are there that must be there to make a mortal sin, but the soul which shrank at one time from the mere thought of offending God grievously, has been brought nearer and nearer to the danger by the habit of venial sin, and when temptation came, its saving fear was gone; it did not help itself by prayer; it gave way, perhaps without a struggle.

Give me, my God, that saving fear to keep me safe when temptation comes, and give me a more tender, trustful sorrow for my past sins. Should I tell You so often that I am sorry for them if I were not? Should I ask You so often for true sorrow if I did not care to have it?

I want to have a great deal of sorrow, and I have so little. But that little You can increase. And so I bring You what I have, as the little lad brought You his loaves in the desert, to be blessed and multiplied.

VIII.

SHAME UPON ME!

To Thee only have I sinned and have done evil before Thee. (Psalm 50, 6.)

I HAVE been thinking for a long time about the sins of others—the one sin of the Angels, and the one sin of Adam and Eve. And I have seen how terribly their sins were punished. But now what about my own sins, my many sins, and their punishment?

The reason I think about the sins of others is that I may come to know how terrible a thing sin is, and so be moved, first to fear and shame, and then to sorrow for my own sins.

Here some of us say to ourselves: "I will just look on a page or two and skip this bit, for fear and shame are things I hate; they are not a bit interesting to hear about, and only make me uncomfortable, so I'll just skip a page or two."

Please just do nothing of the kind, or you will be like a man taking a vast amount of trouble to bring on his apricots, manuring the trees, protecting them from frost, covering them with a net to keep

off the birds, and then, when the fruit is ripe and ready to be gathered, walking off and leaving them to rot on the branches. Do not you be so silly. The fruit we want now is so important that if we can get it and keep it we shall be rich for life.

But it will be sour and set your teeth on edge, you think. No. Sin is sour, but sorrow for sin because we have grieved our Heavenly Father, because we have saddened the Sacred Heart—this is sweet, and, like the fruit on the tree, sweeter and sweeter as it ripens. All the saints tell us this, those especially who have been great sinners. The sweetest moments of Mary Magdalen's life, excepting only that moment when she fell at our Lord's feet in the garden of the Resurrection, were those she spent at His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, washing them with her tears. If we had ever wept like her over our sins, we should know by experience that such "tears are deeper joys than smiles." When the sun shines through the rain we have the beautiful many-coloured rainbow spanning the heavens. So is it with the joy that comes of loving contrition. It fills our heart; it pours itself out on every side; it shines in our face; it brightens all we do and say. No, if you want to see heaviness and gloom, you must look for it, not in the face of one who is heartily sorry for past sins, but where there is sin in the heart and no sorrow.

We need not be afraid, then, of this blessed sorrow, as if it were something dull. On the contrary, if we want to be happy, we shall be eager to get it. There is a song beginning:

The gladdest sunshine through the raindrop steals.

How am I to get this sunshine into my heart? Well, let us see. It is the sunshine through the rain, remember.

I can think first of the *quality* of my sins—how bad they are, how they would be bad even if God had not forbidden them. Telling lies, for example, or stealing things, are things I should be ashamed to be found out in. I must try to get this well into my mind—that sin is bad and disgraceful, something to be ashamed of. Adam and Eve were covered with shame after their sin: they went and hid from God. We have lost that sense of shame, and have to pray for it. When I think I have disgraced myself before others, done something that has made me look awkward or silly, how the colour rises, how my cheeks burn. I should suffer an agony of shame, crimsoning face and ears and neck, if I were to be turned out of an examination-room for cheating. Yet that God and His holy Angels should see me do again and again what is dishonourable and mean—this I can bear without a blush!

Then the *quantity* of my sins. To get some notion of the number, I may go back as early as I can remember, and think of the places where I have lived. I look at them one by one in my first home—the nursery, bedroom, schoolroom, passages, garden. How many sins these places bring to my mind! I look at the church—what about irreverence and distractions there?

Perhaps after a while I went somewhere else. I look at the places in my new home. Oh, if I could see what the recording Angel has against me from the time of my first sin till now—from the nursery, where perhaps my first sin was committed, when I stamped my foot in passion and said, "I won't," to this hour, what a sight it would be!

David said his sins were like the sands upon the sea-shore and like the stars of heaven. Must I say the same? Even little children can be great sinners, if only by the number of their sins. It was the younger son in the parable that was the prodigal.

My sins have been bad, then, and they have been many. They are bad in themselves, but what makes them worse is the littleness and the meanness of the person who has offended God, and the greatness of Him Who is offended.

We get our ideas of the gravity of an offence by comparing and measuring, as we have seen. But to whom can we compare the Eternal God, and how can we measure what is infinite? Infinite Beauty, infinite Wisdom, infinite Power, infinite Holiness, infinite Goodness—how can our minds grasp this? Yet until they grasp it, we cannot know what it is to insult the Majesty of God. Even in the next life we shall not understand Him fully, nor understand fully, therefore, the awfulness of sin. What, then, can we know of it now? It is like a deep pit. We can see a little way down, but all below that is black darkness.

Our minds can never climb to the height where

God is, "inhabiting light inaccessible."[1] Yet they can try, and the trying helps them. This is what one of the saints does. He makes a ladder that is to reach from earth to heaven, from himself to Almighty God. And it is just by the ladder falling short, infinitely short, by the distance being so immeasurable, that he gets what he wants—some idea of the infinite greatness of God, and so of the awfulness of sin. Let us climb the ladder after him—not racing up, not three steps at a time, but only one, slowly, stopping a little on each.

How small a place I fill in this world. Of how very little consequence I am! If I were to die to-night, what difference would it make to any one? I should be missed just at home for a short time. But my death would make no difference whatever in the town or city in which I live. Everything there would go on as usual.

And the city, even if it be London, is nothing compared with England. If we were up in a balloon looking down on London, we should see its big places like little toys beneath us—St. Paul's, and the Thames, and the houses of Parliament, and the Parks. A little higher up we see nothing. Oh, yes, London down there. What, that little speck—*that* London! Who could find me out there?

And all Europe compared to the world—what is it? What am I compared with all the people in the world at this moment? With all who have ever

[1] 1 Timothy 6.

lived or will live? Who could find me out in so vast a multitude?

And this vast multitude compared with God—what is it? Nothing—less than a drop of water in the ocean: "Behold the Gentiles are *as a drop of a bucket*, . . . behold the islands are *as a little dust*. All nations are before Him *as if they had no being at all*."[1] What, then, am I compared with God? The tiniest creature that moves on my hand in the summer-time compared with me is greater far. And I have dared to lift myself up against God. When He said: "*Thou shalt not*," I said: *I will*. How is it God has not punished me as I deserve? I know why. Some One came forward and spoke for me. He took my sins upon His Shoulders and bore the punishment in my place, and so I was let off. God spared not *His Son*, but He has spared *me—because He loved me*.

We ought to pray for shame as the fruit of these thoughts about sin. And we get it at the foot of our crucifix. The scars of the scourges, the crown of thorns in His Temples, the pierced Hands and Feet, are the pains I deserve, borne by Him in my stead. If ever I have seen another punished for a fault of mine that I had not courage to own, I have felt my cheek burn with shame. And have I no shame to see the innocent Lamb of God punished so severely because of the sin that was not His but mine!

Why should poor savages, that have only just heard about sin and the punishment it deserves

[1] Isaias 40.

and what our Lord has done for us, think more about all this and understand it better than we do?

"What has Jesus Christ done for you?" some one asked a newly-converted Indian.

"I will tell you," he said. He went and looked for a worm, brought it, laid it on the ground, and made a small circle round it with bits of straw. Then he struck a flint and set the straw on fire. When the worm felt the heat it wriggled about and tried to escape, but there was no way out. Then the Indian took up the burning straw and cleared a passage for the worm, and it crawled away to a place of safety.

"I am that worm," he said. "That is what Jesus Christ has done for me."

Some years ago a thing happened that thrilled the country from end to end. An ocean-steamer, one of our great liners, was crossing the Atlantic. She held on her way steadily for several days, and at length neared the American coast. No one was prepared for a mishap, when suddenly one night she struck against a rock, sprang a leak, filled rapidly, and began to go down. The boats would not hold all, and life-belts were distributed. Just as all on board were ready to leave the sinking ship, a small, gaunt figure came up through the hatchway and stole on to the deck. It was a little stowaway.

Do you know what a stowaway is? Sometimes a poor little boy wants to get over to America or Australia. He cannot pay his passage, so he steals

on board a steamer sometime after dark and hides away in the hold. When she is well out at sea he ventures from his hiding-place. It is too late then to get rid of him; the captain has to make the best of things and take him on.

Well, this little stowaway had lain hidden in the hold for days, afraid to come out and show himself. But when he heard the shouts and cries he came up to save his life. The captain could not scold him then, poor little fellow. But there was no life-belt left for him. What was to be done? He gave him his own: "Take this, my boy; I will do the best I can." The ship went down that night; the captain was dashed to pieces on the rocks; the stowaway was saved.

When the boy heard this heroic deed talked about, do you think he listened without a tear? On stormy nights, when the wind howled furiously round his home, do you think he forgot a night at sea long years ago, and who went down in the cold waters to save the life of a little stowaway?

And I—do I forget my Saviour?

IX.

TAKE AND RECEIVE.

Rule over all creatures. (Genesis 1, 28.)

If there is one thing more than another that we English people are proud of, it is our freedom. Boys and girls are taught from their first reading-books what a glorious thing it is to live in a free country. They find there, in short, easy words, the story of Harold the Saxon fighting for freedom against the Normans; of the people fighting for it in the reign of John, in the days of the Armada, in the civil war, and in the Revolution of 1688. And however thin the book may be, there is sure to be room in it for the account of the *Mayflower* taking the Pilgrim Fathers to the "Land of the Free," to find in New England what was denied them in the old country.

Yes, "We have fought for Freedom from our prime," and we use without stint that for which our fathers fought. The debate in the House of Commons last night, the columns of praise or blame, and the opinions of every kind in this morning's papers, are all the quiet but sturdy

expression of our rights as Englishmen, to think what we like and to say what we think.

This freedom of ours is no doubt a glorious thing. Some of us would be puzzled how to define it, but we have a general notion that it means we can go where we like, and, within certain limits, do and say what we like. Of course "Britons never can be slaves," and if we are servants it is by our own choice.

Now if you look into your own mind as you read this, you will notice something rising there like the quills on a porcupine's back when it thinks it is going to be attacked: "What! is any one going to tells us we may not be proud of being English children?"

Far from it. It is all quite right and proper. It may be a little hard perhaps to see how we can be "proud" of what we had no hand in bringing about, and of a name that does not make us a whit better than other people. But in a free country we may be proud of anything we like, and give ourselves any airs we think becoming. No one then wants to quarrel with you for holding up your heads as children of Britannia who rules the waves. On the contrary, the more you think about your freedom and the responsibility it brings, the better.

"Responsibility for being free?"

Certainly, the two things go together as light and shade. All God's gifts bring responsibility with them. The greater the gift, the more responsibility. Now free-will is His greatest gift, so of course we have to answer for the way in which we use it.

But why do you suppose we care so much about our freedom and fight for it so hard?

"Because we stand up for our rights, and freedom is our right."

Very good. And why is it our right?

"Because God made us free. He made us all free."

And so we not only take care of our own liberty, but we will not tolerate slavery anywhere. If an English ship catches sight of a slaver off the coast of Zanzibar, she gives chase and boards it, and frees the poor captives there. No, we cannot tolerate slavery:

> Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
> Receive our air, that moment they are free;
> They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
> That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
> And jealous of the blessing.[1]

No doubt about it. It is just possible, though, that an uncomfortable recollection of the past, and a desire to make reparation for that past, has something to do with England's present zeal in putting down the intolerable evil of slavery. She is mistress of the seas now, and does her best to sweep them free of slavers. We cannot, however, forget it was England that in the glorious days of good Queen Bess, began the slave-trade in Africa; that it was one of our greatest seamen, Sir John Hawkins, made by Elizabeth rear-admiral of the English fleet, who was "the founder of the negro-trade;" and that the two largest ships fitted out

[1] Cowper.

for kidnapping negroes, belonged to the Queen herself. But these remarks by the way. What I want to come to is this:

Supposing slavery were not the wicked thing it is, many of us would still refuse to have anything to do with it. We cannot bear to have slaves about us. We are like the God Who made us to His own image and likeness. He will not be served by slaves. He made His glorious Angels free. They were created to be with Him for ever. Their places were ready round His throne. But He would not bring them into the brightness of His Presence without their own consent and co-operation. They were to "help themselves" by using their liberty as He meant it to be used, as they were bound to use it—by "paying reverence and obedience to their Creator and Lord." And some refused.

"Adore Him all ye His Angels." At this command the hosts of Heaven split into two camps. With the cry, *Who is like to God?* the holy Angels ranged themselves under St. Michael's banner. With the cry, *Non serviam*—I will not serve, the rebel Angels went over to Satan's standard. The faithful Angels could have transgressed and did not transgress, they used their liberty well and their reward was Heaven. The rebel Angels "were unwilling to help themselves by means of their liberty. They rebelled against God. They were changed from Angels into devils," and hurled from Heaven to Hell.

See what a tremendous responsibility free-will brings with it. On its use hangs Heaven or Hell.

The Angels had to use it well. So have we. God will not be served by slaves. He wants the loving service of children. He wants it to be said of each one of us, Angels and men, "he could have transgressed and did not transgress," therefore Heaven is his reward.

"But if God loves us, why does He give us what we may hurt ourselves with?"

Because He trusts us, like a father who trusts his child with a knife or a gun, saying to him, "Take care now, don't try experiments, do as I tell you." Will a boy think his father hard for trusting him?

God shows us by His Commandments how we must use and how we must not use our free-will, just as we show a child how to use a thing so as to help, not hurt itself. Then He stands back a little and watches the use we make of it, ready to come in with His help and strength whenever we ask Him.

"It was very silly of the Angels to commit sin when they could so easily have kept good. And it was silly of Adam and Eve too."

Yes, and it is silly of many of their children, some of whom we may happen to know.

"But if we *can* use our free-will properly, I wonder why we *don't*? What makes us commit sin when we know it's silly and wrong, and that we shall have to be punished for it?"

Nothing *makes* us, because we are free. But the question: How is it that we come to commit sin? is such a useful one, that we may well spend a little time in thinking it over.

If we trip on the pavement, we look back to see what made us fall. If we are ill, the doctor asks what we have been eating. If a sum comes out wrong, we go over it again to see where the mistake has been. Common sense teaches us this. It will never do to leave our common sense behind us when our souls are concerned. And so we come to ask ourselves: How is it we fall so easily, get sick so often, fail so constantly in our calculations?

The answer is a short one. Because we cannot make up our minds to go in for hard things or to do without pleasant things. It was because Adam and Eve could not, no, *would* not keep their fingers off that apple, that they fell. We *must* suffer something if we mean to save our souls.

In the beginning it was not so. God meant us to reach our Heavenly Country by a bright road through the earthly Paradise. He may indeed have intended that *each* soul should be put on its trial. Yet even so the trial could scarcely have been a painful one. But we spoilt His plan, we lost our road to that country and our right to it. There is no use wasting time in regrets, or thinking that we should have been wiser than our first parents. The wise thing to do now is to take things as we find them, and be most grateful that a second chance is given to us. No one can spoil our prospects this time. Our getting to Heaven now does not depend on Adam and Eve, but on ourselves helped by God's grace. Our Lord has put all things straight for us. He has restored our rights. Heaven is our own

Land, the Promised Land, just as it was before. Only we have to go to it by another way.

Though it is no use to turn round and blame Adam and Eve for all the trouble they have brought upon us by their sin, it will be very useful indeed to ask the question: "How was it, O father and mother of us all, that you came to commit sin?"

And they will tell us, that as long as they remembered they were servants of God, bound to obey, all went well with them, and they were perfectly content; their passions gave them no trouble, and they were—oh, so happy! But they forgot their place, they turned from serving God to serve and gratify a foolish ambition—"Ye shall be as gods," was the devil's promise to them—and in a moment all was changed. They lost, together with the grace of God, their grandeur and their dignity; they lost their liberty. The passions they had indulged rose up against them, and they who had been so free found themselves in chains.

"What are passions?"

Not an easy question to answer; but let us see. You know what is meant by currents in the ocean. Well, there are in our soul certain movements which, like currents, draw us towards one class of things and drive us away from another class. We are drawn towards the things we like—a watch on my next birthday, a visit to the Zoo. When these things are not yet in our grasp, we long for them; when we get them we are glad. Here, then, we have the passions—love, desire, joy. On the other hand, we are driven from what we dislike—a visit

to the dentist, a sharp reproof; if we see anything of this kind threatening, we dread it; if it actually comes, we rise against it. And so we have the passion of hate, fear, and sorrow, or anger.

These passions are not in themselves bad. Indeed, when they are kept in proper order, they are good—helps, not hindrances, on the way to Heaven. They were helps in Paradise whilst they were kept in order. Before Adam and Eve set their hearts on that miserable apple, they loved and desired what was good, *good for them;* they feared what was bad, bad in itself, because of the disobedience, and *bad for them.* And so long they were innocent and happy.

The passions are like spirited horses, which will carry us far either in one direction or in another. Our business is to see they do not run away with us. They need a firm hand and a strong curb. But they are to be guided, not destroyed. If we love and hate the right things, love God and our neighbours, and hate sin; desire Heaven, and fear Hell, we are making our passions carry us on our way to Heaven.

The passions, then, are not bad in themselves. How could they be? There was nothing bad in the souls of our first parents when God created them, and the passions were there then. But they were all in order and under perfect control. As long as they remained so, they were what God meant them to be—*helps.*

"Are the passions bad now?"

Not bad, but full of mischievous, tricky ways,

so that we cannot trust them. They are spirited horses, useful indeed, and carrying us on our way when they behave themselves, but sadly troublesome at times. They kick and they rear, they stumble and they shy. Sometimes they run away with us, and sometimes there is no getting them to move. Now they need the whip and spur, and now it is all we can do to rein them in. They like to go their own way, and often enough it is the wrong way. They need a watchful eye and a firm hand always. The saints managed them splendidly, and made them do good service. The great point is to break them in early. The work is much easier if done then. But done it must be, if we are to reach Heaven.

The worst of a horse is that he cannot be made to see reason. It is no use shaking your finger at him when he is more than usually restive, and saying: "Now this kind of thing won't do at all. I didn't get you for this, and I can't put up with it. You are a hindrance to me instead of a help." It is no use wasting words on him. He must be brought under by main force. So must our unruly passions.

"Oh, but there's kindness."

Well, yes, there is, and perhaps with your horse it may go some way. But I am afraid it will not answer with the troublesome creatures that we have to deal with. Certainly the kindness that means yielding to them will not answer. We have called them horses. But if they get the mastery over us, and are allowed to go and grow unchecked, this

name is too good for them. We must call them wild beasts then, they are so fierce and strong.

"Yet even wild beasts can be tamed, can't they?"

Certainly, and our passions are never too strong for us to master with the help of God's grace. We *must* master them, that is all. And we must remember that it is unwise to have more to do with wild beasts than we can help. Some people make pets of them when they are small. It is not safe.

A gentleman in India kept a pet tiger which he had had from a cub. The mother he had shot one day as she was carrying off this tiger-kitten in her mouth. The little creature looked harmless enough, and he brought it home, fed it, nursed it in his lap, made a pet of it, in fact. Weeks and months went by, and it grew fat and strong. His friends saw how fast it was growing, and began to be alarmed.

"It is not safe, you know, to have a beast like that going about; the savage nature is there, for all it looks so quiet; it will be at mischief some of these days, you will see."

But he only laughed. "Oh, it's all right, there's time enough yet; besides, Puss is tame; she won't do me any harm."

It was a sultry day in June. He was sitting in his tent, smoking a cigar. One hand held his newspaper, the other hung down at his side where his big pet was lying. Presently something between a purr and a growl made him turn his head. The creature had raised itself, and its rough tongue was licking

the blood from a cut in his hand. Its eyes glowed like balls of yellow fire, the tip of its tail moved restlessly this way and that; its savage nature was rising. There was not a moment to lose. He whistled for his native servant, glanced rapidly at him, at the tiger, at the rifle on the table. The man saw, understood, caught up the gun. There was a flash, a bang, and the huge creature rolled over—dead. The ball was just in time. Another instant, and the pet would have sprung upon its master and killed him.

Others who have played with monsters have not come off so well. How often we hear of men and women putting their heads into the lion's mouth once too often. It is never safe to trust wild beasts, even when we have tamed them. It is never safe to let a pet passion grow up and get strong and bold. A day will come when it will be the death of us.

Baby comes down to dessert now. He is lifted into his place beside papa, whence he can survey all the good things around. At first it was the almonds and raisins and the biscuits with the pretty pink sugar that took his fancy. But one day, when people were too busy talking to attend to him, the little hands and then the lips found their way to papa's glass. There was a wry face the first day, and the glass was pushed away with a pouting "nasty." But a second time and a third time, many times after that, the little hands found their way to that glass, and baby's opinion changed.

The wry face disappeared, there was licking of lips instead. And now as soon as he is seated, both hands are stretched out with a cry of "Wine, wine." Oh, why was no one noticing sooner! The liking has come, and who knows where it will end? Perhaps the beginnings of a habit are formed; perhaps, as he grows older, the child may help himself from the decanter on the sly; perhaps—oh, how often it has happened—a life of misery will be traced back to those first bright drops in papa's glass that seemed too small a thing to mind.

"But if our passions are not bad, why do they do us so much harm? And why don't we make them help us if we can? And what must we do to prevent them from hurting us?"

Oh, please, please—three hard questions all in a breath, and not one of them can be answered in a hurry. We will take them one by one, and I warn you to have patience.

Londoners are said to know next to nothing of the sights of their own city, which foreigners come from the ends of the earth to see. It is the largest city in the world, lying in four counties, and having a population as large as the combined population of Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Rome. We are told that to walk through all its streets, lanes, and alleys, never traversing the same one twice, would require a ten miles' walk every day for nine years. The streets placed in a line would reach

round the world and leave a remnant that would stretch from London to San Francisco.

To live in such a city, without caring to know anything of the wonders it contains, seems to our continental neighbours a piece of intolerable stupidity. Some one has suggested that instead of running off to the Continent for their summer holidays, Londoners should stay at home and see what is to be seen at their own doors. Let them start with a long tour on the top of an omnibus, and get a good general idea of the great city.

Just fancy what a multitude of things would be seen so. Think of the palaces, mansions, art galleries, museums, churches, theatres, clubs, hospitals, hotels, prisons; of the parks, bridges, monuments; of the wharves crowded with merchandize from every land coming in, and with manufactures of all kinds going out; of the vehicles laden with goods of every sort; of the shops into which all the wealth of the world is poured. Think of all the wares crowded into the shop windows of one street —necessaries and luxuries: food, dress, trinkets, toys—why, our minds get dizzy when we try to think of the innumerable objects that meet the eye of the sight-seer in London.

Now what are all these things for? The best way to answer this question is by asking another. To whom do all these things belong? To God, of course, first of all. For the matter out of which all things are made is His. Out of one of the three kingdoms—animal, vegetable, and mineral—they all come, and these kingdoms are His. Therefore all

this multitude of created things must belong to Him, the Creator of all. "*O Lord our God, all this store . . . is from Thy hand, and all things are Thine.*"[1]

But He is very kind and lends us His things. He cannot give them to us in such a way as not to remain Master of them Himself. That is, He cannot make over His property to others as we can. If *I* give, I lose all right to what I have given. My rights have passed over to the new owner. God cannot give like this, because He can never part with His rights. What has once belonged to Him as Creator must belong to Him always. We talk about gifts of nature, gifts of fortune, gifts of grace. But these things are only lent, we shall have to give an account of our use of them.

"Take and receive," our Heavenly Father says to us, as He sets us down in the midst of His treasures.

Little need, perhaps, is there to tell us to *take*. We do it readily enough. We lay our hand upon all we find around us. A good father and mother, a happy home, whatever we have in the way of talents, position, the goods of this world, health, pleasure—all this we take as a matter of course, and perhaps we have never said a real hearty "Thank You" for it. We have then to be reminded of St. Paul's words: "*What have you that you have not received?*" All these good things are God's. He makes me heartily welcome to them it is true. But they are His for all that, and I must use them according to His will.

[1] 1 Paral. 29.

"Do we know how God wants us to use His things?"

He tells us very clearly. "I have made them all for you," He says to me, "and you I have made for Myself. You are to know Me, love Me, and serve Me in this world, and to be happy with Me for ever in the next. And the things you find around you in this world are all to help you to do this."

They do not all help us in the same way. Some, as

> the solid earth,
> The ocean broad and bright,
> The countless stars like golden dust
> That strew the skies at night,
> The wheeling storm, the dreadful fire,
> The pleasant wholesome air,
> The summer's sun, the winter's frost,

take our thoughts to Him straight. A flower by the wayside, a singing bird will, if we let them, fill our hearts brimful of praise. We feel inclined to do as Holy Scripture bids us: "*Oh, clap your hands, all ye nations, shout unto God with the voice of joy;*"[1] like the delighted child who, in the glow of a glorious sunset, knelt down and cried: "Oh, beautiful God, I love You." Heaven is all praise and love—nothing more to hope for, nothing more to pray for; the time for that will be over, the time for enjoyment come. And our joy, as we look upon the Face of God, will break forth for ever in songs of praise. Oh, that happy Life everlasting, that life of praise, why should we not

[1] Psalm 46.

begin it now, begin to practise it now, by letting the beautiful things of this beautiful world do what they were meant to do—*help us*, by lifting our hearts to Him Who made them.

Another and very common way in which God's things help us is by use of them. It is here the danger comes in from our passions, as we shall see presently. They are God's things mind, not mine. I must try to drive this into my head, for though it is so plain, there is nothing I understand less when I come to the practice. God says to me when He lends me His things: "Take them, but remember they are to help you to serve Me and to save your soul. So you are to use them just as much and as long as they help you to do this. And if any would hurt or hinder you, you are to keep clear of them altogether."

To think we should have to be told that! Surely, common sense ought to teach us to use what helps our work and not what spoils it. It does teach us this in the matters of daily life. Cook does not stuff the goose with chocolate, nor flavour her soup with jam. Neither have I to learn the common-sense rule to use things for the end for which they were made. The days are gone by when I put everything into my mouth from a sugar-stick to a poker. I have come to the use of reason now. I don't take a gold pen that splutters, because I like the look of it, and throw my German dictionary behind the fire, because I *don't* like the look of it. Looks go for nothing with me here. What will *help* and what will *hinder*, that is the question. And

so the bright, useless thing is tossed into the fire, and the ugly old book with its mottled back gets a tender and even a grateful handling because it is *of use*. It is only in the affairs of our souls, then, that we neglect to use our common sense. Why do we neglect to use it? Because of our foolish passions, those likes and dislikes of which we were speaking a while ago. Love and desire, hate and fear, draw us violently in one direction, or drag us off in another. So it is not what will *help me*, but what *I like* that moves me to choose this thing rather than that. I know it would help me very much to go to daily Mass, and I never go. I know that book I found about is doing me harm, and I go on reading it. Is this sense? If we saw such stupidity in those who serve us we should be quite cross. And do we think God does not mind seeing stupidity in those who serve Him?

How careful we are when we lend what we prize —our books, our music, a new knife, a bicycle. What directions we give: "Be sure you take care of it, don't dirty it, don't leave it out in the wet." And if in spite of these warnings people are careless and our things are spoilt, how vexed we are. "You had no business, Alec, to sharpen your slate-pencil with my best blade, I never lent you my knife for that." And perhaps we snatch the knife away and let Alec know he need never ask us to lend him anything again.

Look up at Almighty God. Every day, and every hour of the day, He has to see the precious things He has lent us, spoilt, lost, misused, turned

against Him. He gives us a ready tongue that we may praise Him and help others, and we go and hurt Him and those He loves, by saying unkind things. He gives us a pretty face, or what we consider such, strong muscles, sharp wits, a good memory, and we use all these things to offend Him by vanity.

How often I have done this! And He is patient with me. He does not take the things away, but trusts me with them still. We expect our friends, our servants, even our dogs, to stand up for us, to take our side and defend us if we are attacked. Look at that terrier on the rug with his nose between his paws. He seems to be asleep. Yet give his master ever so slight a tap and you will hear a low growl bidding you beware.

God's creatures are on His side. They do His work, they rise up against His enemies. Bears killed the boys who mocked one of His Prophets; lions devoured those who had devised the death of another; an Angel destroyed eighty-four thousand of those who would have destroyed His people. And not only His mighty Angels, but His little weak servants in this world, stand up for Him.

A babe of five, not yet able to read, spent the time of Mass in digging out with her nails the faces of all the men in her picture prayer-book who were scourging and crucifying our Lord.

A little boy had made a great pet of grandpapa. He was always at his side or on his knee, now

examining the works of his watch, now diving into his pockets in search of apples, and at all times pouring his confidences into a willing ear. Suddenly a marked change took place; the boy shunned the old man, spoke to him gruffly when obliged to speak, and would never be left alone with him. No one could account for this, and at last he was taken to task for it. Then the truth came out. Three weeks before, the little fellow had heard for the first time the story of the Passion—how our Lord *stood before the governor, who scourged Him and delivered Him to be crucified.* "The governor—that must have been grandpapa; father always called him so. How could he have been so cruel!" Ralph was shocked, and would have nothing more to do with him.

God's creatures, God's servants are on His side, and turn upon those who turn against Him. Why have they not turned upon me? Why do they go on helping me, being kind to me? Because they see He loves me still, and will not have me hurt. When David saw that his faithful servants were determined to punish Absalom, that wicked child who had turned all his father's gifts against him, and even tried to kill him, he forbade them to take his life. "And the King commanded Joab, Abner, and Ethai, saying: Save me the boy Absalom. And all the people heard the King give charge to all the princes concerning Absalom."[1]

[1] 2 Kings 18.

And so, my God, You have given charge to all Your princes concerning me, an ungrateful child, worse a hundred times than Absalom. You are patient with me, and tell them they must be patient too. This is why You still lend me Your things—fire, water, food, a good home, my eyesight, my hearing, my memory, my mind. This is why my Good Angel is still by my side, and my patron saints are looking down on me, not in anger, but in love and favour.

Take, my God, and receive all these things that You have given me. Take them because they are Yours, and receive them because I give them to You again. Make me remember always that they *are* Yours, and that I shall have to give You an account of the way I use them. Help me to please You by using them for Your glory and service; that so You may say to me one day: "Good and faithful servant, well done!"

X.

HANDS OFF!

Touch not; taste not; handle not. (Coloss. 2, 21.)

"If all things are to help us, how can those things help that we are not to use at all?"

Just by our letting them alone—the use I am afraid we must make of your "*If*" now. We have had a good talk about our tools and must really be getting on. There is a great deal to be said yet in answer to your three questions, and here you calmly start a fourth.

"We do want, though, to know about those other creatures. It seems so queer to use things by not touching them. Would you mind telling us how you do it?"

Very well. I suppose we must give the time then. Only blame yourselves for the stoppage, not me. Remember I meant to go on.

The puzzle is how can things be useful without being used? In this way: Supposing the apple in Paradise instead of being handled and eaten and so made an occasion of sin, had been made an occasion of obedience and fidelity; supposing Adam and Eve

had said "Hands off" when they passed the tree—would not this have been useful? If they had only let it alone, the apple would have helped them and helped us all to keep innocence and peace and happiness, to keep Paradise, to keep Heaven. The use of things by abstinence is a very important one, and taught, you see, from the very first. The Church reminds us of this every Friday. But we have to practise it, not on Fridays only, but on every day of the week. I must not touch those papers, they are private. I must not take those sweets, they are not mine. I must not join in telling that unkind story. Here are other senses besides the taste coming in for a share of abstinence, helping us by *not* being used. The things from which we abstain give us the means of practising many virtues, as temperance, self-denial, charity.

"It's hard though."

Of course it's hard sometimes. But what of that! We shall often and often have to do what is hard in order to save our souls. And we must make up our minds to do it. Abstinence makes us give up what we should like to have, and we call this hard. Was it less hard to those who have gone before us? We have to give up a little passing pleasure: a book, a foolish friendship. Our Catholic forefathers had to give up husband or wife, children, home, all they had to live on, all they looked forward to in this life.

Oh, yes of course, that stands to reason, we say to ourselves, but me, *me* to suffer!

Certainly, why not? Oh, that queer idea of

ours that *we* must be exceptions to the general rule, that whenever there is question of taking trouble or bearing pain the words of Assuerus to Esther are said to us: "This law was not made *for thee*, but for all others."[1] Father Faber tells us of himself that as a boy he could never bring himself to believe that he would have to die. Of course every one else would, but somehow something would happen to prevent death coming to *him*—"the Day of Judgment, or something." Perhaps we are like him. Yet death came to him. And pain and trouble will come *to me*. Who has given me a free ticket to Heaven? Our Lord paid dearly to enter His Kingdom, all those who have followed Him into that glory have had to pay their price, and oh, it was a heavy one for some. What am I going to pay? Am I not a little bit ashamed to think that Heaven, which cost some so much, is offered to me for so little! That little I must be ready to pay. And *I will* be ready.

Besides the things which our senses perceive, there are others beyond the reach of the senses, which are meant to help us in the same way, that is by praising God for them, by use or by abstinence.

St. Paul says: "*Neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us.*"[2] We think of horses and dogs, of the sea and the stars, as creatures, and perhaps we can think of our books, our food,

[1] Esther 15. [2] Romans 8.

and other things of which we have been talking, as creatures too. But St. Paul uses the word *creature* in a way we are not used to at all. If life and death, and things present and things to come, can all be called creatures, surely we can call everything a creature—our studies, our games, our sleep, a headache, a joyful surprise, our friends; success, failure, disappointment; the weather, health, sickness; our duties, our pleasures, our troubles; all that happens to us; all that is said or done to us; kindness, unkindness, temptation, sadness, praise, blame; changes, events, wars, famine, a good harvest, long life, short life—anything and everything we may call a creature.

Now you will start two difficulties at once. Some of these things, you will say, we cannot help, and so we must use them whether we like or not. And some of them are bad, and so they cannot come from God. A headache, or failure at an examination, we cannot help. Well, what of that? They are God's creatures, and when He sends them He does it for our good, and He expects us to take them patiently, and so give Him the opportunity of rewarding us.

"But when people are unkind to us, He doesn't send that. He couldn't make people unkind, you know."

I knew that was coming. It was sure to come. It is a difficulty that has puzzled the wisest heads from the beginning of the world. It is such a big difficulty that to find their way out of it some of the early heretics said there were two Gods, one who

made all the good and nice things, and one who made all the bad and nasty things.

"How silly!"

Yes, but all heresies are silly. Our Lord's teaching is this. What is bad cannot come from God. By bad I mean sinful, not the hundred and one things we call bad because we do not like them. Sin can never come from God. It comes from the wrong use we make of our free-will. But all other things, pleasant or unpleasant, the effects of sin even, happen by His will and permission. Some one has said a word that has stung me. It was very unkind, I think, and of course most unjust. Supposing it to have been both, it came to me from God. He was not the cause of the unkindness and the injustice, but the trouble this is to me came from Him. He could have prevented it from happening. He could prevent anything from happening if He liked. But He wants me to have the opportunity of practising patience and forgiveness. The trouble therefore is from Him, meant to help towards my salvation, and it is entirely my own fault if it does not. So we must take from the Hand of God all that comes, gratefully if we like it, patiently if we do not like it; nay, taking it gratefully always, because it is from His Hand. To-day, it is a letter from grandmama with a postal order for five shillings; to-morrow, it is a toothache and a visit to the dentist—both things from God, nothing ever meant to separate us from Him, all things sent to help us to Him. "Deo gratias!" then for all.

If you know any one who welcomes whatever comes with a "Deo gratias!" you know a saint.

This then is the rule for those things that come, whether we will or not. And when the choice of using or not using things is left to us, we have to choose wisely—using *what will help*.

Remember too those words: "*as long as it helps and no longer;*" they are part of the rule. Some ink has been spilt on a table. We send for the joiner and he takes his plane to it. All right, it does its work. Then we want a picture hung up. Will he take his plane to that? If he does we shall think him mad.

"Ah, but you see I do so like using the plane; it is so nice to see the wood come peeling off."

But it's no use, it's not doing the work, take a hammer and nails, man.

And as with the joiner's tools, so with mine. I have had a hard morning's study, and a row on the river or an amusing book will help me in the afternoon. But it does not follow that the amusing book will be a help for ever after, and that I can lounge about with it all day to-morrow, diving into it at every spare moment, and at many moments that are not spare—when I ought to be at my geography, or joining in that game, or giving a helping hand in this bit of work. I may enjoy it then as long as God says, "Enjoy it." Conscience, that little voice of His within me, will tell me pretty clearly how long that is. And when He says, "Give up the enjoyment, now, I want you for something else," I must be ready to lay the book

aside, because it will not be a help any longer. I am to try and bring myself to this—to make no account of likes and dislikes when I know what God wants. Mind, I do not say I can help *having* them. No one can help liking an interesting book by the fire, and disliking a walk to school through the drizzling rain. But I must learn to make my free-will conquer my inclinations, so that when the time has come I close my book and get on my boots and wraps. Do I do this?

We are told of the great singer and highly gifted woman, Jenny Lind, that because her taste for reading had not been wisely trained in her youth she was always "at the mercy of any book that interested her." We too, unless our likings are under control, are at the mercy of whatever happens to interest us. It may be anything you like, a book, a bike, a companion, a foolish fancy, football, tennis, our toilette, late hours. These things may really bring us into slavery if we are not on our guard. "*Rule over all creatures*" was God's first command to man in the beginning; it is the command given to every one of us, to you and to me. We are to rule over all the things given to us for our use and for our pleasure. As long as I am ready to enjoy when it is the hour for enjoyment, and to give up the enjoyment when conscience whispers, "Time's up," so long I am *ruling* as God bade me do, and so long I am safe and happy. But when I am at the mercy of anything that interests me, so that I cannot give it up when right reason and conscience tell me I ought to give it up, then

I am no ruler, but a slave, and I begin to be unhappy.

When bicycling first came into fashion doctors welcomed it as a healthy recreation, good for muscles and lungs and nerves. Now they are crying out against it, not because it is found to be bad in itself, but because of the ridiculous excess to which it is being carried. City men, whose exercise during the year is limited to climbing an omnibus twice a day, hire a bike for a month, and go scouring the country in every direction, trudging up hill and tearing down, twelve hours out of the twenty-four. As the result, they come back to work not only fagged out, but often seriously injured in health, sometimes with the beginnings of a disease which will bring them to the grave.

"The silly old things!"

Stop a bit. I have not finished. The young B.A. who has worn herself out with studying for her degree, acts in like manner when her long needed holiday comes. Well or ill, in all weathers, she must bike her thirty or forty miles, just for the sake of saying she has done them. This is the holiday nowadays. This is what people do by way of rest and recreation, to recruit their strength at the end of one year of hard work, and to fit them for another.

Some, not all by any means. The generality of men and women are not so stupid as to abuse useful things in this reckless way. *Means to the end* is their rule as we said before. Except—note the exception—*when their souls are concerned.* Then they

never so much as think of any rule. They are so engrossed by the means that they lose sight of the end. Let us see if this is so.

Food is a means, so are games. But how many make these things an end? Do I? Am I greedy, thinking only of my likes and dislikes, taking no dinner on Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent, because I do not like fish, and making myself ill with plum-pudding and mince-pies when Christmas comes? Games—what a delightful thought it is—are part of school work nowadays; I may and ought to enjoy them heartily. But I must not be playing when I ought to be working. Study is my chief business at school. I can scarcely go in for it too earnestly at the right time. But I must not puzzle out that sum at Mass, nor be so eager about my examinations as to miss my morning and night prayers.

"It seems to me that if we could always choose right when we have to choose things, we should never commit any sin at all."

Exactly. Not only should we never commit any sin, but we should be great saints. And here we see the harm our passions do us. They are always calling out for what they want, and preventing us from doing what God wants. Well no, preventing I should not say, for we have our free-will. But they are always pushing forward their likes and dislikes, so that we choose again and again what suits and pleases *them*, not what helps us to serve God and save our souls.

"What must we do when the passions want to make us do what we oughtn't?"

Make use of the grandest gift God has given us, our free-will. Nothing can force that. You have seen the great waves nearing a rock that stands up in the midst of the sea. They gather in size and strength as they roll on, and at last they dash against it with such might that we almost expect it to be swept away. But they only fall back upon themselves in showers of spray and the rock stands up firm as before, unstirred by a hair's breadth. So it is with our free-will; the passions may come, all the devils of Hell may come, and if it chooses to stand firm, they will go as they came. The devils are so strong that one of them could destroy all the armies of the world, were he allowed to put out his strength. Yet all of them together fall back defeated before the "No" of a child of seven. More wonderful still—He Who gave us this grand gift respects it. God Himself will never force our free-will.

This is the freedom of the children of God—that not the world, "all wicked company," nor the flesh, "our corrupt inclinations and passions," nor even "Satan and all his wicked angels," "*nor things present, nor things to come, nor any creature can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*"

Here is a more glorious liberty than that which is our birthright as Englishmen, a freedom of which Irish, Scotch, German, French, American, Spanish, English, may well be proud. If we must be proud, let us be proud of this.

Nearly thirteen hundred years ago there lived an Irish Saint named Deicola. We know little about him, but this has come down to us, that he was always happy and smiling. He was praised and sought after, or he was blamed and neglected; his work prospered, or everything went wrong; people were kind to him, or his plans were upset—*and he smiled.* The devil could not endure that happy smile. So temptation came rushing in upon him, surrounding him on every side, trying to frighten him, to trouble him, to overcome that free-will of his, and still Deicola smiled. One day his disciples were at his feet, looking up into that radiant face, and wondering if anything ever had, if anything ever could send a passing cloud across it. At last one bolder than the rest—no doubt it was the youngest—spoke out the thoughts of all:

"Tell us, dear Father, why you always smile." The Saint looked up to heaven and—

> As if some gushing fount of joy
> Had broken in his heart—

he said, "I smile, because no one can take my God from me."

Oh, blessed be this free-will of ours! Blessed be God Who gave it to us! May He give us together with such a gift, the grace to use it as we ought.

"Ah, but you see Deicola was a Saint and we are not; it isn't easy *for us* to laugh when we don't like things."

Oh those poor saints, what they will have to answer for! Instead of drawing us onward and upward by showing us the way, their example invariably casts us down into the depths. We fling into their faces that they are saints, as if this were taking an unfair advantage of us. Come away then from their brightness, and let us look for an example somewhere else.

Look at that farmer over there. It is a drenching day, the sky like ink, flashes of lightning, and the roll of thunder filling the heavy air. A day for the dismals one would think. Yet there is no sign of them about him. He has planted himself at the barn door and there he stands, pipe in mouth, watching the downpour with a beaming face.

"You've missed your outing to-day, friend, but you look very merry over your disappointment."

"Merry, bless ye, I'd need be! Pleasure's one thing, and my pocket's another. This ere rain's been wanted for weeks. It'll do the country no end of good, and bring the barley on nicely. I'd need be merry, I had."

Disagreeables get a welcome, you see, from folks who have an eye to business. Here is this good man willing to give up his day's holiday for the sake of a little gain. How comes it that for a holiday which will never end, I am willing to give up nothing?

The announcement of a European war would

bring desolation and misery into thousands of homes. Yet army contractors would go about rubbing their hands—or at least would rub them in private—because food, clothing, ammunition, would have to be provided for the troops, and all this is *good for trade.*

We are all traders. In Germany every man has to learn a trade, even if he be a prince. And every soul that comes into the world must learn to trade. Our Lord's injunction to us all is, "*Trade till I come.*"[1] He provides us with opportunities, and our business is to turn them into profit. The saints were good traders, and had a wonderfully sharp eye for business.

"What is this for eternity?" St. Stanislaus would say to himself, when a snub came from his elder brother who was very unkind to him. *We* should probably have said, "I am not going to stand this; Paul ought to be ashamed of himself." Perhaps he ought. But this was not the young trader's thought. His business was to take the snub and turn it into gain for Heaven. Instead of answering back, he asked himself quietly, "What is this for eternity? The chance of a higher place there, of being nearer to our Lord for ever." It was enough. He made his choice.

The standers-by thought Stanislaus had not heard, or had no spirit, to take the snub so quietly. But some who had seen the colour mount to his face, and the lips move as if in prayer, guessed that he was minting money for Heaven as usual, and

[1] St. Luke 19.

asked themselves why they should not go and do likewise.

We imagine sometimes that Almighty God provided extraordinary means for His saints to enable them to get so rich. But this is not His way. Troublesome journeys in the cold, hard work in a shop, rough clothing, poor food, the joys the morning brought, and the evening's disappointment and pain—common things like these were the creatures put in St. Joseph's way for him to trade with. Surely, then, little common things will be good enough for me. "Where there's a will there's a way." What is wanting is the will to make use of the way.

I know what it is to be on the alert, to see my chances at a game. How rarely a tennis-ball takes me unawares. Whether it comes from the right or from the left, I am ready for it and turn it to my profit as well as I can. I must train my soul to be watchful in the same way, on the look-out to take all that comes from God and turn it to profit.

To use things as we ought, we have to master our passions. They do all the mischief. They draw me to the things I like, even when these will not help but hurt me, by drawing me into sin. What must I do, then? Draw myself the other way, not give into them, keep the body in its place, for it is almost always the body that drags the poor soul down.

You remember how Ismael had to be taught to keep his place. As long as he behaved himself, remembered he was a servant, and could not have

all he wanted, he was allowed to be in the house. But when he turned upon Isaac, the child who had the promises, fought with him, got the upper hand, hurt him, Abraham stepped in at once and turned him out of doors. The moment the body wants what will hurt the soul—too much food, or play, or sleep, that moment it must be called to order. Ismael cried when he was turned out, and Abraham was sorry for him, but it could not be helped. So if we find the body crying, we may pity it perhaps—but let it have its own way because of the crying?—oh, dear no!

"It's hard sometimes, isn't it, not to let the body have what it wants? It is hard not to be greedy when we see nice things. We think we won't, and then when we see the things, we are."

Yes, and so we must ask our Lord to help us against ourselves. He knows it is hard. And so He has come amongst us to be always near when we want help. We have all of us our inclinations, and we cannot help liking some things and disliking others, but we must try to hold these feelings in check, or they will lead us into sin.

All sin comes from an over-fondness for some pleasure or an over-fear of some pain. We cannot bring ourselves to go without something we like or to go in for something that hurts, and so we sin. And this in little things as well as in big. It came into my head this morning to say something clever about somebody I do not like. It was unkind, and even untrue. I knew it was wrong to say it. I should not like it to have been said of me. But it

would give me a moment's pleasure and people would think me smart. So I said it—a venial sin. Take any fault you like, and you will be able to trace it to the same root. What is the remedy? We must not like things in this extravagant and disorderly way. We must hold ourselves in, keep our likes and dislikes in check, so that when we know what God wants of us we are able to go against our inclinations and choose what He likes, not what we like. A good horse is ready to turn to the right or to the left as soon as he finds out what we want; he does not care which way it is. But a vicious horse does care. He wants to go, and means to go, his own way if he can. We must not be vicious, but ready to give up our own way.

"I think that is just the hard part, because you know we can't help caring; you say we can't. And it is very hard to make yourself not care when you do all the time."

It is hard, so hard that it is impossible. No, we cannot make ourselves not care for the things we like, but we can care so much about saving our souls and pleasing God, that we put our likes and dislikes on one side and *go through them* as the boat goes through the waves.

"And is not that hard, too?"

It is, but God is always at hand to help us. "*Take courage and be valiant. . . . I will not leave thee nor forsake thee. . . . Take courage and be strong.*"[1] When our Angel Guardian sees us safe in Heaven at last, he will say to us: "*The Lord thy God hath carried*

[1] Josue 1.

thee, as a man is wont to carry his little son, all the way that you have come."[1] Does this look as if we were left alone to get on as well as we can by ourselves? No, we must not lie down like cowards and say, "Oh, dear, it's hard!" But we must think of those who have gone before us doing much harder things—the girl-martyrs, Agnes and Basilissa, one thirteen, the other twelve years old, loving their life as much as we do, but when the hard choice came between saving their life and denying Christ, *choosing right.* They were weak as we are, but they prayed, and the strong God stood by them and helped them through a short struggle to an eternal crown. We must pray and pray earnestly, and God will stand by us, too, and we shall choose right and win our crown.

Another helpful thought. God asks for nothing from us without offering a reward—a hundred-fold in this world for leaving our own will and eternal life hereafter. It is well worth any one's while to be good for the happiness it brings even in this world. You may not believe it. But take God's word for it and the experience of those who have tried.

"Does God always like what is best for us?"

Always, always. It is because some things are bad for us that He tells us not to touch them.

"Help yourself," our friend says to us, as we sit down to table. "Help yourself, child," our Heavenly Father says to us as He spreads out all His good things before us. "Take what you like. You are welcome to all as long as you do not harm yourself. Do not take what you know will be bad for you."

[1] Deut. 1.

"Take care, that will hurt, baby," father says to his youngest boy when he sees him running after a wasp. "That book will hurt you," our Heavenly Father says to us. "Let it alone like a good child." If He did not care much about us, He would leave us to find out for ourselves what things are bad for us. But because He loves us so dearly, He cannot bear us to learn to our cost, and so He warns us. He knows better than we do what will do us harm, and He loves us better than we love ourselves. For we are so silly that we run after things that will sting us when we get hold of them. He has to stop us from hurting ourselves. His Ten Commandments are to prevent us from doing what would be bad for us even if not forbidden.

"Yes, but I didn't quite mean that. I don't think it will sound right if I say what I mean."

Perhaps we can get it right if it comes out.

"You said sin was a dull thing, and I can't help thinking it's rather nice to be bad sometimes and that it's dull to be good always. I mean it's nice to be strong and free, as they say English people ought to be."

Let us take the difficulty to pieces and look at it bit by bit. And first, as to the niceness of being bad. No one means to say there is no pleasure but only dulness in sin. If it were so no one would commit it. It is for the sake of the pleasure that we commit it. But this pleasure soon passes away and scarcely deserves the name. It is gone directly, and like a wasp, leaves a sting—remorse, discontent, sadness. A dulness settles on the soul

that commits mortal sin often. Its light-heartedness is gone, and the gloom of the soul comes up to the surface and appears on the countenance. Parents, and those who watch a child with loving interest, notice a change, and wonder—no, not wonder, but fear. It is so well known that sin brings dulness, that they fear. It may be health, they think, or a passing trouble or temptation. But if there is a settled gloom, they are anxious; they look at that clouded brow, *and they fear.*

Trace a snail
By its slimy trail,

and track the devil by the dulness he leaves behind. Even if the dulness comes from temptation only, and there has been no sin, still it is a sign the Evil One has been about. He is so dark that he spoils the brightness of a place even by passing through. St. Ignatius tells us that when a servant of God is uneasy and troubled, this disquiet comes from the evil spirit, who is trying to upset him. Mind, it must be one who is serving God in earnest. For if a person who cares little for mortal sin is anxious and disturbed, this trouble may come from God, Who wants to frighten him back into the right way.

So now you see what the pleasure of sin is—a draught sweet to swallow, but leaving a very bad taste behind.

You said something else, about our being more free when we sin.

"Yes, it does look somehow as if we are weak when we give up our own way and keep the Commandments, and strong when we break them."

It is only look, then, and looks, you know, are apt to deceive us. But let us think it out together. *Why* do we break Commandments? *Why* do angry words *escape* us, as we say? *Why* do we give in again and again to the bad habit that has had so many resolutions spent upon it? Why? Because we have not strength to hold ourselves in, to bear the pain of self-denial. You say you "could not help" firing up this morning when you were vexed. Now that translated into English is, "I could not overcome myself. I should like to have done the right thing and answered gently, but it would have taken trouble, and cost me an effort, and I could not go in for this, I was too cross." Exactly, "Out of the *strong* came forth sweetness," Samson said.

Tennyson speaks of the men who defended Lucknow as

> English in heart and in limb,
> Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure.

Notice: "the *strength* to obey, to endure." It is the endurance of our troops, even more than their bravery, that we are proud of, because it is so hard to suffer and to wait and to be silent—to bear what hurts and not break out into words and acts of impatience. Waterloo was gained by standing more than by fighting—no, we cannot say that, for on the battlefield standing *is* fighting. "How beautifully that English infantry *fights*," said Napoleon, as he saw how the British squares held their ground, battered and thinned as they were by the missiles from the French guns.

Not for four hours, as Wellington had calculated, but for eight did those brave squares stand, burning to find an outlet to their pent-up energy, yet waiting patiently. How they longed for the word to be up and doing. But this was not the work of Waterloo. What was wanted there was "the strength to obey, to endure." All through the morning, all through the afternoon, the Duke rode past the ranks, and the command was always the same—*to stand.*

"Stand fast, 95th, we must not be beaten: what would they say in England?" Some officers rode up to him when the fight was at its thickest: one regiment was utterly exhausted, might it leave the field?

"Will they stand?" he asked.

"Till the last man has fallen."

"Then let them stand!" was the answer.

Evening was falling when the Prussians at last had come up in force, and the assault of the Old Guard was delivered. Then the Duke, wheeling his horse round in front of his men, cried:

"Up, Guards, and at them!" The charge that followed, and the pursuit by moonlight, which lasted all through the night, completed the victory, but what finally defeated the despot, and saved Europe, was the eight hours' *stand* of that tremendous day.

One is a little surprised to find the clear brains of British children so muddled on this point as to take the power of resistance for weakness. They should be the last in the world to make such a mistake. Our boys and girls are as familiar with

the field of Waterloo as with their own garden. They know where the château of Hougoumont was and the farm of La Haye Sainte, and they can tell you the exact distance of both from the ridge where the Duke stood. They know the appearance of the field at 11.45, when the fight began, and at 8.30, when it was over. How, with all this prodigious amount of learning, they have contrived to miss the lesson of that field is marvellous. What has that "red sabbath" taught them if it has not taught them this—that the highest courage is endurance!

This was proved in 1815 on the field of Waterloo. And it is proved every day on the hidden battlefield of our souls. O children, to be still and bear is harder far than to do and dare. It takes more strength to bear little things than to do great ones; to be patient than to be plucky; to hold ourselves in check, restraining the impatience in foot, or head, or lip, than to pour forth torrents of indignant eloquence. And, thanks be to God, the strength is not wanting. All the world over a brave stand is being made on these hidden battlefields. Soldiers as enduring as any to be found in the British squares are fighting there. Perhaps one of these, a French duchess, will show us how heroic is the courage that simply keeps its post in the hour of trial.

"I know who it is, the Duchesse D'Alençon, who wouldn't leave her stall at the Charity Bazaar, because she thought she ought to give others a chance. And she stayed and was burnt."

That heroic woman teaches the lesson grandly.

Who would have thought that one known in French society as "the timid Duchess" would have stood her ground like that! But I was not thinking of her. To find the heroine I had in my mind we must go back a hundred years, to the time just before the French Revolution, and look at a dinner-party in one of the splendid mansions of Paris:

At the head of the table sits the Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, the master of the house. The beautiful girl on his right is his daughter-in-law, the Duchesse de Doudeauville. She is only fifteen, but her life is already full of peril. For as the idol of the gay, frivolous society of Paris, she is the object of general attention. Every one wants to see her, flattery meets her at every turn. Her life is a round of gaiety and amusement, and no *fête* is considered complete without the presence of the beautiful young Duchess. Is her head turned with all this admiration? Is her life really as gay as it seems? Let us see.

She takes her seat with a brave yet shrinking heart, for it is Friday, and she has had to brace herself for the trial that Friday brings. She is the only person at her father-in-law's table that keeps the law of abstinence, and abstinence-days at that table are days of penance indeed. Not that any one interferes with her; by the promise made at her marriage she is left free to practise her religion. But the freedom is a strange one. The Vicomte is annoyed that one whom he considers a mere child should venture week after week to give him

this silent rebuke in his own house and in presence of his guests. And he is at no pains to conceal his annoyance. Severe looks and words, and the icy coldness of his replies, make the Friday meal a torture to the timid, sensitive girl, who has no companion to whom she can turn in her distress. For the guests, usually so ready with their compliments, follow the lead of their host, and by significant shrugs and glances, or smiles of pitying contempt, add to her confusion.

"What a shame! Why didn't her husband stand up for her?"

He was far away. And what could a boy of fourteen, in charge of his tutor, have done?

"A boy of fourteen?"

Yes, those were strange times. Ambrose de la Rochefoucauld and Augustine de Montmirail were married by the will of those they dared not resist. They themselves had very little say in the matter. He was a shy, awkward lad, unlike her in every respect, except in this, that he clung to the faith of his Baptism, and resisted every effort made by his teachers to laugh him out of it. For this firmness he had to thank the simple peasant woman who had charge of him until his sixth year. She was so afraid of the bad teaching he might have later, that she used to make him kneel by her every morning, and, with his face turned to the village church, say: "My God, grant that my heart may never be corrupted by evil doctrine."[1] When he was six, the

[1] *The Life of Madame de la Rochefoucauld.* Translated by Mrs. Cashel Hoey.

boy was taken from his nurse and his quiet country life, and given into the charge of tutors, who, by dangerous books and conversations, did all they could to shake his faith or to make him ashamed of it.

Now how did these children—for at the time of their marriage they were little more—preserve their faith? Ambrose tells us that he used to pretend he was stupid, and did not understand what his tutors tried to put into him. "I preferred," he says, "to be taken for a fool rather than to be called '*un esprit fort*,' the title so much coveted at that time by the young nobility of France."

When left to himself he went to his room, and there on his knees prayed as his old nurse had taught him, that God would keep him safe, and let nothing spoil in his soul what Holy Baptism had planted there. Was this boy's heart a brave one, think you? Is it easy to be thought a fool when you understand quite well, and when every one is laughing at you for being so stupid?

"Oh, he *was* brave. I think he was quite as brave as Casabianca. I know I don't like to be laughed at."

"And what did Augustine do?"

If we could have looked into her room on the nights between Thursday and Friday, we should have seen her, long after the household were asleep, on her knees before her crucifix. Midnight struck from the clock towers in the city, and one, and two, and still that poor girl prayed on, asking with many tears for the strength needed for the morrow's trial.

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And it was given her. When the dreaded hour came she commended herself again to God, and entered the dining-room with a heart trembling indeed, but braced and ready to bear hard things for Him.

We can fancy St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, those glorious defenders of the faith in their day, looking down not only lovingly but proudly on these young confessors, and counting them as worthy comrades on the battlefield.

"Did the Duke know that the Duchess was treated like that, and did she know about him?"

Yes, and they used to encourage each other by writing. But after awhile those who had charge of them began to fear that the Duchess influenced her husband and helped him to keep firm to his religion. So one day they opened her desk and read one of her letters to him. The two were not allowed to write to each other again.

"I would not have stood that. I would have gone to the King and complained."

Of course you would. So would most of us. It is the commonest thing in the world to speak out when we are hurt. But these two were not common souls, and they did not take their trials in a common way. The noble lesson they teach us is this—to yield and bear patiently as far as we can do so without offence to God, but as soon as there is question of sin — *to stand firm as a rock.* Let us learn this from the young Duke and Duchess de Doudeauville.

There! So much for your three questions—"Why do our passions do us so much harm? And why don't we make them help us, if we can? And what must we do to prevent them from hurting us?" It has taken a long time to find the answer, but I think it is found at last. We see now why we must be afraid of our passions; what prevents us from using our free-will as we ought; where we are to find the strength we need to use it well. We see, too, from the story of these French children, that the silent battlefields have their heroes, as brave, aye, braver far, than those that fought at Waterloo. We see how all things, without exception — loneliness, contempt, fears, temptations—can all be helps, can all turn to the good of those who love God; how, "*Neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature* can against our will *separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

"Hurrah! we've done with sin at last!"

Just what we shall say when we come out of the darkness of this life and stand in the clear light of Eternity.

XI.

THOUGHTS BY THE WAY.

The invisible things . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. (Romans 1, 20.)

And now I want to come back to our friend the engine that we left at Willesden Junction. It taught us some lessons before, and I think it may teach us some others yet about our responsibilities and the precautions we ought to take in our journey to Heaven. Remember that in our Baptism we are charged to bring our souls safe into the presence of God. That is a more momentous and perilous journey than any which has to do with the goods and bodies of men. Suppose we step on to the footplate and ride with the two men there. I say *we*, but there is barely room for themselves, and it is only by a special privilege that any one can travel in their company. However, they are very good-natured, and on seeing our order, invite us to jump up and squeeze somehow into the "cab."

Don't speak, we must take care not to be in the way. Their whole attention on starting must be given to the engine, and they are looking up at the semaphore-arms and down on the platform, waiting

for signals. What strikes us so much in those who have to work the train and care for its safety is the order and obedience observed everywhere. Independence is the last thing that would be tolerated. The best driver is not the man who can start his engine soonest and run it fastest, but he who can read off the signals quickest and obey them sharpest. To watch and obey signals—this is the main work all along the line.

See! the station-master is signalling the rear guard, telling him the train is ready to start so far as he is concerned. If the luggage is in and the tickets are examined or collected, as the case may be, the rear guard will signal the first guard, and he again the engine-driver. All these signals are given by green flags during the day and green lamps by night.

Yes, they are all ready, the signals pass quickly from one to the other. And now the driver must see that the points are right. These are movable slips of rail that serve to connect different lines and shunt a train from one to another. At big stations you will see them in every direction. It is the signalman's duty to arrange them for each starting train, that it may take the right road. The driver must see that they are ready and that the "right away" signal is lowered before he starts. One, two, three minutes—and still the signal-arm is stretched across the line forbidding them to move.

"All take your seats, please," the porters are shouting. The signal-arm is "off." There is a hurried banging of doors, the cheeping of the guard's

whistle, the flutter of a green flag, and with a prolonged screech from the escaping steam, we glide out of the station.

"What a bother it is to wait for all those signals!"

Not such a bother as having your carriage flung up into the air or hurled into the river, or to be lying on the rails with your legs off and your head split open. It is the signals that prevent accidents.

Look at the black threads in front, crossing and recrossing in countless lines, a perfect labyrinth through which we shall surely never find our road. Yes, all is safe and easy, for our way has been prepared, the pointsman has steered us on to the right line. And so, though not without divers swervings and joltings and bumpings as we round the curves, we thread our way through the mazy junction, run past the signal cabin, and leave the station behind us.

I want you to notice these two men in the cab with us, on whose ceaseless watchfulness and care depend the lives of so many. You see at once that they are fully aware of their responsibilities. They are not fussy or flurried, for the simple reason that flurry and fuss would be the last things to help them. But their earnest faces, their attitude, their talk, all prove that their business is their main affair. They will not be actually thinking of it at every instant during the journey, but the thought of it will never be far away; everything they see and hear will recall it, everything will be directed to it, nothing will be allowed to divert them from it.

They are cheerful enough and have their little joke now and again, but you will not find them playing cards or absorbed in a book.

"I don't see anything very wonderful in that, because dreadful things would happen, you know, if they were careless."

Just so, their vigilance is the most natural thing in the world. Nor is there anything very wonderful in the vigilance of other drivers whom we know pretty well, and whom we find of course equally alert and energetic in their far more important business. I say *of course*, because of the dreadful things that would happen, you know, if they were careless.

And yet, because the children of this world are often wiser than the children of light, it might not be amiss to compare the watchfulness of these men on the footplate, with that of the drivers we know.

Suppose we find out some of the regulations they have for their guidance, by turning over a few pages of the Rule-book, drawn up by one of the great Companies for the instruction of its servants. It may possibly furnish us with a few hints for ourselves.

"Before starting, the driver must be careful to look at the starting-signal, and see that it is 'off' and the line ahead clear for him to proceed."

"The engine-driver must stand on his engine in such a position that he can see straight ahead, where the machinery he has to handle is so ready to his hand, that he can work it without taking his attention off the signals."

"The driver must keep a good look-out all the time the engine is in motion. He must frequently, during the journey, look back and see that the whole of the train is following in a safe and proper manner."

Surely there is vigilance enough here. Yet it would be all to no purpose without the watchful eye looking down upon the train from the signal-cabins that flash past us now and again. You would scarcely think that the road along which we are flying so fast, is all prepared for us up there. We cannot guide ourselves. If we are to be kept safe from harm and on the right track, the man up there must take care to remember the destination of our train, and to connect the points on the rails in such a way that we follow the right road swiftly and surely.

"I wish we could go up that ladder and get into the signal-cabin, and see the man at his work."

It is not easy to get up there, and requires a special order. Yet the wonderful smartness and accuracy of a signalman's work is only appreciated by a visit to one of these cabins. You would see a man surrounded by a number of levers fixed in a frame that runs all round the little room. These levers are machines with long handles, which by means of wires move the signal-arms of the section. It is the signalman's duty to see that there is a cabin and a section between any two trains running on the same line. They get a signal for a train when it is two cabins and sections off their own, by beats on the bell of the electric telegraph, different

beats for different trains. This signal is called the "Is line clear?" signal. If the line is clear, the signalman replies by the same number of beats as he received. If he has a train at his cabin, the signalman in the rear of him stops the next train at his cabin, and so on all along the line.

You see then how important the signals are, and how his own safety, and the safety of all in the train, depends upon a driver's attention to them. The Rule-books say:

"After sunset, and in foggy weather, or during falling snow, every engine must carry head-lights, and every train must carry a red tail-light on the last vehicle, and two red side-lights."

But in vain would the red lights show "danger," if the driver were to run on heedlessly.

"It would be very wicked of him to do that, because the people in the train don't belong to him, and he has no right to risk their lives."

"I hope the driver has to give an account to some one."

Certainly he has. His Rules say:

"On his arrival at the station, the driver ends his day's work by making a report, in which he records particulars of the run he has made, and of any repairs required by his engine."

Your anxiety that those holding an important charge should be called to account, is most just and praiseworthy. The Railway Companies lay down rules in this matter which we should do well to study and apply. We shall be coming to them presently when we have to consider stoppages on

the line. Please to note also that the servants of the companies are not allowed to expose *themselves* to danger, saying their lives are their own, and they may run risks if they choose.

"Reckless exposure of himself or others to danger on the part of any servant of the Company will be treated as an offence against the Company's Regulations, and will be punished accordingly."

"The Company's servants must not walk upon the Line, except when necessary in the execution of their duty. If circumstances compel platelayers to be within six feet of a passing train, they must lie down. Men working in a tunnel, when trains are approaching in both directions, must, if unable to reach any recess in the wall, lie down in the space between the two running lines, or between the line and the side of the tunnel, until the trains have passed."

"*We* mustn't run into danger either."

No, but supposing danger comes in our day's work without our seeking it, what must we do then?

"Do like the men in the tunnel, who take all the care they can to keep themselves safe."

In foggy weather, when the danger to trains is greater, precautions are multiplied, as we have seen. The Rule-books say:

"When a fog, or snowstorm, comes on by day or by night, fog-signalmen are at once to betake themselves to their posts along the line, supplied with detonators. If there are obstructions, they must put down detonators to warn the engine-

driver of an approaching train, and then, standing as close as they dare to the coming train, exhibit their Red sign-lamp, and shout out, 'Danger!'"

As fog-signalmen cannot leave their posts, no matter how cold and bleak the night, refreshments are to be taken to them. Intoxicating liquors are forbidden. They are visited at their posts to see that they are properly performing their duties, and are supplied with the necessary signals.

The engine-driver has his instructions also:

"In foggy weather, or during falling snow, the driver must travel cautiously, keeping a sharp look-out for the fog-signalmen, who will show him a green signal held steadily in the hand, when the fog is so dense that the fixed signals cannot be seen."

"I think I see what that means. The foggy weather is temptation-time, when we can't get on by ourselves because we can't see clearly."

And what will the fixed signals be, which are clear enough at other times? Think.

"The Ten Commandments."

Bravo!

"And I know who the fog-signalmen are who hold the green signal out to us, and tell us we are safe on the line."

Very good. I wonder if any of you know what the fog-signal itself is that we hear going off, "bang, bang," about Christmastide. The Rules tell us that the loud report it gives under the heavy steam-engine means that the signal-arms stand at "Danger."

"Why, conscience, of course. I'm sure mine goes 'bang, bang,' often enough."

Then it is to be hoped you behave like the engine-driver. He is ordered to reduce speed immediately, and then proceed with caution until he receives a further signal for his guidance.

"But suppose our conscience doesn't tell us when we are in danger?"

We must take care that it works as it should, and gives the note of warning properly. It is our detonator. Railway rules order that if any detonator should fail to explode when a train passes over it, the circumstance must be reported to the Superintendent at once.

"That means——"

Very good, if you see it, that will do, we have not time to explain everything. It is not enough then to follow our conscience. We must take care that it is a safe guide, and if we suspect it is out of order, must get it set to rights. It is like the station-clock, and the watches of the railway officials. These are required to go properly. They may not mislead people on the line, but must be regulated according to the fixed standard of Greenwich time. To secure uniform time being kept at all the stations on the line where it is not telegraphed, every guard, before starting on his journey, has to satisfy himself that his watch is correct with the clock at the station from which he starts, and compare it again with the clock at the station where his journey ends, before commencing his return journey.

Our Greenwich time is the Law of God in the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church.

If our conscience agrees with these, it is a safe guide and we may trust it. If it differs from them, it is out of order and must be set right.

"How?"

By comparing it with the Commandments and bringing it into likeness with them, just as you see people at the station setting their watches by the clock there that they may keep the right time. And so in preparing for confession we are not merely to see if we have done anything against our conscience, but to examine our conscience itself by the Commandments that it may be properly regulated and not lead us astray.

"The most important part of a driver's daily work is the careful examination of his engine. It is not enough to make a general survey of the different parts of the machinery, he must so train himself to habits of minute and careful observation as not to overlook the smallest and apparently least important detail. There are men who have been driving for years and have daily inspected their engines, as they thought thoroughly, and who may, however, have habitually overlooked some one small part which has eventually led to a bad failure on the road. Everything that could possibly go wrong should be examined, no matter how improbable any mishap may be."

"The greatest care must be exercised in the cleaning, trimming, and lighting of signal lamps, and particular care is to be taken to keep the reflectors of lamps well cleaned."

The engine you see requires constant super-

vision. Before each run it is carefully examined, and on its return it is again overhauled. Every morning the magnificent corridor train, which runs every afternoon out of Euston, is brought to Willesden Junction to be thoroughly inspected and garnished, so that it may start next day in its usual trim array. Perhaps a train needs nothing more than oiling, but again and again the examiner finds defects that require immediate attention. There is no passing over such flaws, saying they are of no consequence, they will all come right, they can afford to wait. The railway officials would think you had lost your senses if you were to talk in that strain when an engine is concerned. "Look to beginnings," is their motto. If the injury is of a serious kind the engine is simply taken off the rails and not allowed to stir till it has been thoroughly repaired. The station has its infirmary in the shape of large store-rooms where everything needful is kept ready to hand. Sick trains are marked with a red card on which the nature of their malady is written plainly for all to see: "Blocks worn out," "Spring broken," &c.

"People go into retreat when they get as bad as that, I should think."

They could do nothing better. But the greater number of those who make a retreat see to their repairs in good time, and so they never come to the state of being thoroughly disabled.

Yet in spite of every precaution there are accidents on the line now and then. And so they are wisely provided for.

"When an accident or obstruction occurs on any part of the line, it must be immediately reported by telegraph, or by the most expeditious means, to the stations on each side, to those who have to see to the working of the line."

At all big stations the grim-looking "break-down train" with its tool trucks is kept always ready to start at a moment's notice for the scene of any accident or emergency. By the way, I have never seen in any Company's Rule-book such a regulation as:

"When an accident or obstruction occurs on any part of the line, the train is to be immediately abandoned to its fate. Things are to be allowed to go from bad to worse. The engine-driver, fireman, and guards, are to fold their arms and do absolutely nothing to right the train, and should help be offered by others, the officials will abstain from accepting such assistance and from doing anything whatever to help themselves. On such occasions the Company's servants are expected to give up all for lost and allow the next train to dash into them or over them as the case may be."

"What a ridiculous rule! Of course you didn't find it anywhere."

Pardon me, not in any Company's rule-book, I said. But it may be found word for word in the private rules of some officials I happen to know, and the fidelity with which they carry it out accounts for the many mishaps on their lines.

I have seen some of these officials fly into a passion when any defect in their train was pointed

out to them. They were willing to incur the risk of a serious accident, rather than believe there was anything the matter, and took it as an injury that the mere possibility of such a thing should be hinted at. Perhaps they thought this showed a proper interest or affection for their charge. The railway staff *are* touchy, I believe, about all that concerns their line.

Dr. Grant, the holy Bishop of Southwark, could never resist a joke. He was pacing the platform one day waiting for the train from Brighton. It was no uncommon thing to have to wait for that train. It had got into bad ways, and rarely turned up when it was due. His Lordship had finished his Office and was occupied, no doubt, with pious and salutary thoughts, when he noticed a porter come sauntering towards him, his countenance wearing no expression of any kind. The Bishop suddenly showed keen anxiety. He scanned the posters for an instant, and turned short round:

"No particulars I see as yet of the accident on the Brighton line."

"What accident, sir," was the eager answer; the porter was another man, eyes, ears, tongue, brain, all on the alert.

"You haven't heard? Well the public will know soon enough, I suppose."

"What was it, sir? it's my line."

"I suppose so. If only they can get a report," the Bishop went on leisurely, "no doubt it will be in the evening papers, at least in

the Special Editions, in the Extra Specials at latest."

The poor fellow was losing patience.

"Look here, sir, would you be so good as to say what was the accident on this 'ere line, we've none of us heard tell of it."

"Oh, it is of no consequence," said his Lordship, "but I have heard that one of the Brighton trains *arrived in time*."

The porter turned on his heel and walked off in a huff. But a few yards off the joke seemed to dawn upon him. His face expanded, and presently he looked around as if in search of some one. The train steamed into the station just then, and there was the usual few minutes' bustle. As it passed the platform slowly on its way out, the cruel Bishop had the satisfaction of seeing two porters with anxious faces in conversation. His first victim had found a second.

We must not fail to notice the most important of all the precautions taken to ensure the safety of the train, without which all others would be useless. It is the strict obedience required of all the officials, from the conductor who represents the Company and goes about with a broad gold band round his hat, to the humblest shunter and platelayer.

"Each train is under the control of the head-guard, who gives instructions to the engine-driver."

"The engine-driver and fireman must pay immediate attention to and obey all signals, whether the cause of the signal being shown is known to them

or not. The driver must not, however, trust entirely to signals, but must be vigilant and cautious."

But supposing the engine-driver does not like the head-guard, who gives his orders in a gruff voice, will that be an excuse for disobeying him?

"Of course not. What does it matter whether he likes him or not, no one would be so stupid as to think about that."

But what if he does not like the orders either? He is told to start when he was having a joke with a porter on the platform, or he is kept waiting at a wretched little country station when he wants to get on.

"Those things can't be helped. He has got to do as he is told whether he likes it or not, because that's his business. Every driver must see that."

I am not so sure. However, if *you* see it that will do, or rather if you *remember* it when disagreeable orders come from head-quarters.

As with the driver, so with his train. It is "made up" by the shunter before it starts on its journey—so many first-class carriages, or none at all, a saloon or a fish-truck, just as it happens. It is not asked whether it would like to be a corridor train or a coal train. In making it up, the shunter thinks of the work it has to do, and chooses its parts accordingly. I have never yet heard of a coal waggon refusing to move because it was afraid of meeting its gaudy rival of the road, the Pullman Car, and being put to the blush. But I *have* heard of people so dissatisfied with the way they are put

together, with the gifts God has given or refused them, that they could find nothing but cause for grumbling and envying others. They could see nothing noble or interesting in the work they were set to do, and so they put no heart into it. I have heard of a little girl who was tempted to kill herself because she was not pretty; of a baby that took a violent dislike to a priest because he said it had not got nice hair; of boys and girls living in a state of misery and upset because they were not clever, because their parents were not well off, because they had not grand homes and carriages and servants like others.

"But the little girl couldn't help being tempted, you know."

Granted. And so I hasten to add for the benefit of the theologians present, that no thought, however foolish, is wrong or hurtful unless we of our own free-will give way to it. What I wanted to show is that such thoughts *are* foolish. To see this clearly is the first step to fighting them. For they *have* to be fought, mind—and conquered.

"How?"

By trying to see things as God sees them. By looking back to that time far away in His eternity when He saw a vacant throne in Heaven and determined to offer it *to me*. It was made for a particular Angel, who had thrown away his chance and lost it. I must not lose it. So God made me very carefully with a view to that beautiful place which is to be mine for ever, my throne in the Court of Heaven. He gave me such and such gifts

because they would help me to get there—these talents, not those. All good things were in His Hand, but all would not be good *for me;* He chose some for me, not others. "I will give this," He said to Himself; "I dare not give that." And so if I have not got things I should like to have, it is not because God grudged them to me, because He does not love me as much as others to whom He has given them. Quite the contrary. It is *because* He loves me so much that He will not give what would not help me, what I should not use well, what would please me here perhaps for a little while and be the cause of my unhappiness for eternity. That Angel whom I am to succeed lost his throne through pride. God was afraid to give me what would make me proud. He does not want me to be a failure like that poor Angel. Do *I* want it? Oh, how can I be so silly as to think I know better than He Who loves me so dearly, Who is going to give me everything I want, everything He has, by-and-bye, as soon as He gets me into Heaven and can say to me safely: "There, child, take all I have and welcome, help yourself *to all.*" Cannot I wait a little while, cannot I trust Him?

Every engine is built for its own line; if it has difficult climbling to do, it is made extra strong. All circumstances of our lives are known to God. The trials and the dangers in our way to Heaven were all quite clear to Him when He made us, and so we are strong enough for every stiff climb and bit of rough road that lies before us. Did you ever hear the engine saying with panting breath as it

goes slower and slower up a steep hill: "I . . think . . I . . . can . . . I . . . . think . . . . I . . . . . can . . . . . I . . . . . think . . . . . I . . . . . ca . . . n!" And when it has got to the top, saying faster and faster as it runs down the other side: "I . . knew . . I . . could . . I knew I could. IknewIcould IknewIcouldIknewIcouldIknewIcould!" *We* will say the same. We are not going to be beaten even by a train.

What a good sensible thing it is, this train we are considering! It lets the shunter put it together as he likes; and after doing its best up hill and down hill, and having all manner of things attached and detached on its way, it is content to be shunted into a siding when the guard has done with it at the end of its journey, and wait there till it is wanted again.

Notice too, how careful it is to make use of the opportunities that come in its way. You saw those troughs we passed just now? They are its feeders. To produce the great snow-white volumes of steam that burst incessantly from the funnel, the boiler must be fed with an enormous quantity of water. It can carry 3,000 gallons in the tender, but that is not enough for a long journey. How does it get supplied? The driver fills his tank at stations, but by an ingenious contrivance the engine is able to feed itself as it goes along. At intervals along the line, troughs brimming with clear water extend for some hundreds of yards between the rails. Underneath the tender a kind of shovel-shaped shoot is suspended. The moment the engine is over the

trough, the fireman by the turn of a lever, lets down the water-catcher, and the velocity of the train forces the foaming and seething liquid up the shoot and through an aperture in the tender, where it cascades over into the big receptacle communicating with the tank. The whole operation occupies somewhat less than half a minute, yet in that short space of time the driver tells me we have probably picked up about 1,000 gallons of water. During the night great watchfulness must be observed not to miss the water troughs.

A word now, about the running of the engine.

"The engine-driver must regulate the running of his engine, so as to avoid extreme speed or loss of time."

"Guards are provided with forms to be filled in at the end of their journey and sent to the District Superintendent. They have to report especially any loss of time, to state the number of minutes lost, the number of engine of another train causing delay; the state of the weather on the journey; the name of the guard in charge, assistant guard, driver; what time their train started; where stoppages occurred and their cause; and to sign their report. In the event of any occurrence having taken place which might have involved in any respect the safety of the train, he must make a special report thereof."

"I see a lot of things in all that. But fancy having to say the number of minutes they've lost. I'm sure I couldn't."

"When there's danger, I think the men on the

engine have the best chance, because they see the accident coming and can jump off."

Yes, but some people think of their duty, never mind how much they themselves may suffer.

Quite lately a driver and fireman were going with a Great Western fast train from Windsor, when the connecting-rod broke, and one of the ends thumped through the casing of the boiler. Fire and steam were blown with great force from the fire-box, reaching to the tender, and the two men were badly burned and scalded. In spite of this they stood manfully to their posts, and brought the train safely to a standstill. But their self-sacrifice cost the poor fellows dear. So injured were they when the train came to a stop that they were hardly able to leave the engine to summon assistance. They were carried to the hospital and died the following day, within three hours of each other.

"Oh, what a pity! But it *was* brave of them to stay on the engine, because you know the steam would go on spurting out at them all the time."

A driver does all he can to avoid a stop on the line, except of course at stations. It is the actual stop that most delays a train, though it be for an instant only. He does not like even to slacken his speed. If as he dashes on he finds signals set against him, he will "slow down" indeed, but most unwillingly, for a few minutes' check will often make him lose the advantage of all the time he has gained, and with a heavy train speed is not to be picked up again directly. If the engine has lost time on the

road, the driver "punishes" it by hard running as it nears the station.

We are like the train in this respect. We must *keep going on* if we want to run our course easily. A few days', nay, a few hours' check will often make us lose the advantage we have gained. "With a heavy train"—and some of us drive remarkably heavy trains—"speed is not to be picked up again directly." So it is sadly foolish to drop our spiritual duties for awhile, to omit our morning prayers, to leave out the examination of conscience in our night prayers, to pass over our day for Confession, and to miss a Communion. We shall find it hard to regain what we have lost, and in any case we shall lose much time. You notice that the engine gets "punished" for losing time by being made to do harder work than usual! To go on quietly and not by fits and starts is a safe rule.

But the poor engine is not always at work. It has its rest and recreation. Even an engine needs rest. The driver knows it well, knows all its good points, knows exactly its capabilities and its limitations. And so he is careful not to tax it beyond its strength. The South Wales express to London runs its course of one hundred and fifty miles without a stop only every other day, as "it would shake an engine to pieces to keep on doing it six days a week."

And now we are at our journey's end. The good engine which has borne us in safety over so many miles is nearing its destination. We feel

inclined to give it a friendly pat on parting, for it has given us many a useful hint that will come to mind later, and help us perhaps in the management of the far more wonderful engine we are guiding and controlling every hour.

Our friends on the footplate deserve our thanks too for the silent lesson they have given us during our pleasant run in their company. With one hand resting on the lever of the vacuum-brake, and his gaze concentrated into a fixed stare through the "spectacle glasses," that little circular window in front of him, has stood the driver, steady as a statue, watching for distant signals which his keen sight enabled him to perceive long before they were visible to us. The fireman has been ceaselessly pulling open the sliding fire-doors, tossing three or four shovelfuls of coal upon the glowing mass within, and clanging them together again. We can bear witness to the fidelity with which they have discharged their trust, and to their observance of regulations.

Shall we take one more look at the Rule-book as the train steams slowly into the station?

"In all cases engine-drivers and guards must act according to the best of their judgment and ability in the circumstances in which they are placed."

You see those in charge of a train are ***bound*** *by* ***rule*** to use their common sense and devote to the tremendous charge entrusted to them all the intelligent and wide-awake activity of their minds:

"*Go thou and do likewise,*" we say to ourselves.

XII.

WATCH!

I say to all: Watch! (St. Mark 13, 37.)

How clever the world is now-a-days in warding off disease, and even discomfort from our poor bodies! We are to be made pain-proof from head to foot. On every side advertisements of wonder-working drugs assail us. They are thrust upon us in the streets, they get under our feet in the trams, they swarm in the newspapers, they tumble out of our magazines, they are dropped into our letter-boxes, and pushed under our doors, and posted up in glaring letters at railway stations. There is plenty of help ready for the body. But the soul and its disease, sin, is there any preservative against that, anything ready to our hand at all times and in all places? Is there such a thing as this?

Yes, and it is God Himself Who provides it: "*Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin.*"[1] If we remember Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven, we shall be kept from sin; we have His word for it.

[1] Eccles. 7.

One of these Last Things, the most terrible, or rather the only terrible one, we have already thought about. Heaven we shall think of by-and-bye. Our business now is with that gate which leads from this short life into the great Eternity beyond. The name of that gate you know, and you know too that it opens straight into a Judgment-Hall. There is no passage, no ante-chamber. Straight from the room in which we breathed our last, and from the company of those we loved, into the Presence of our Judge, alone with Him to hear the sentence that is to decide our eternity—this is Death.

"As I find you I will judge you," is a word of our Lord's, which though not found in the Gospels, has come down to us by tradition from the Apostles themselves. It means this: As I find you in the moment of death, so shall I judge you in that same moment. If your soul is free from the stain of grievous sin, I will appear to you "with a mild and gracious countenance." I will open My Arms and say to you: *Come!* If there is mortal sin on your soul, the first sound you hear in the next world will be the word: *Depart!* Remember this when temptation comes, and *thou shalt never sin.*

This remembrance is for us all, the strong and the healthy, as well as the weak; the young as well as the old. Most perhaps for the young. It is for the little ones chiefly that the guard surrounds the nursery fire.

You, dear children, have your life before you, it might seem out of place to speak to *you* of death. Yet you too must be ready, for children die. Every

hour of the day and night they are passing by hundreds through the gate of Death. Tiny coffins that you could easily carry in your arms are brought into church and laid upon a stool before the altar for the last holy rites. So children cannot afford to think themselves secure against death.

A little prince under the charge of a tutor said to him one day:

"Tell me something about death."

"Oh, nonsense," was the answer, "you are too young to think of death. Put it out of your head."

The boy said no more then. But a day or two after he drew his tutor's attention to a graveyard they had passed together.

"Many of those graves," he said, "are shorter than I am, and those who lie there must be younger."

It was a shrewd remark. He had noticed those little graves, and now came again to his tutor with the request, "Tell me something about death."

Let us think quietly then about what concerns us all so very much—quietly, we are not going to say anything frightening. Let us dare to talk of a subject which nobody likes to hear mentioned. If we listen to the conversation going on around us, in drawing-rooms, at parties, at afternoon teas, we shall hear everything under the sun talked about. But death never. It is not considered "good form" to speak of that, at least by name. The papers published accounts of "The Passing of Mr. Gladstone,"

and warned his friends to be prepared for the "early inevitable." And not in the papers only, but in our own homes, the dreaded word is avoided or glossed over. When people get old and infirm and the end seems at hand, you will hear their friends speak in whispers about what is coming. "When *anything* happens," they say, "we shall have to write here and there." After death they get the coffin underground as soon as possible, and try to forget. These silly folks are like children frightening themselves about "the bogy-man." If they would look it straight in the face they would see there is nothing to scare them so. Death has no terrors for those who are trying to serve God. But most certainly it is terrible to those who are not serving Him, or trying to save their souls. A priest tells of a woman, to whose death-bed he was called, that she cried out:

"I can't die, I won't die, get me up, walk me about."

They got her up, they carried her backwards and forwards about the room. It hastened the end of course, and she died like that. "Thou fool," our Lord called that rich man who pulled down his barns and built greater, and said to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer." *Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee.*[1] This foolishness comes of not remembering the Last Things. So let us think now whilst we have time of this one among them, Death.

[1] St. Luke 12.

The first thing we notice about Death is that it is certain. "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*"[1] *Appointed*—that is settled, fixed. *Unto men*—no exceptions, therefore, unto *me*. Yet it is very hard to realize that *I* am going to die. Of course everybody else is—but *I—my* death given out in the church; prayers asked *for me; my* mortuary-card with date and age filled in; *my* grave in the churchyard; people talking about me as I hear them talking of others:

"Oh, by the way, have you heard poor N—— is dead?"

"You don't say so! No, I hadn't heard; how very sad to be sure!"

All this is certain, everything else is most uncertain. Nothing more certain than the fact, nothing more uncertain than the circumstances—the time, place, manner of my death.

On what does the time depend? Of course on God's will; but from our point of view, on a horse running away, a false step in the dark, a train going off the line. A thing like this, such as might happen any day—and my chapter is closed, no more chance for me, probation over, no more time to change.

What follows now if it is certain that I am going to die, and quite uncertain when? This, that I must be always ready. When I know an event is coming, on which much depends, an examination for instance, how careful I am to ascertain the precise date, so that I may begin to prepare in time and not be taken unawares.

[1] Hebrews 9.

Death is the great examination on which everything depends. When is it to be? God knows, but He has not told me. Therefore I must be always ready. What is it to be ready? Our Lord tells me. He says He will come like a thief in the night, unexpectedly. "Watch ye therefore, *because you know not at what hour your Lord will come.*"[1] "*Behold I come as a thief.* Blessed is he that watcheth."[2] "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh *shall find watching.*" "And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, *and find them so*, blessed are those servants."[3] Notice, *at the second* watch, when life is just beginning, or *at the third*, only a little later, as if it were just then we need to watch most, because we feel so safe. "*Watch ye therefore, for you know not when the lord of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. Lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch!*"[4]

What is watching? Being awake, on the alert, ready for anything that may happen. It is to be always, as we hope to be found when our Lord comes—in a state of grace, keeping His Commandments, trying in real earnest to please Him, fighting our predominant fault in which our chief danger lies. "*Lest coming on a sudden, He find you sleeping.*"

What is it to sleep? To be unconscious of the realities around us. To put away the thought of death. To think there is plenty of time yet. The

[1] St. Matt. 24. [2] Apoc. 16. [3] St. Luke 12.
[4] St. Mark 13.

Ten Virgins were all told to be ready, but five thought there was time enough; there would be warning, and then they could see to their lamps; it would all be right somehow.

In olden times, as you know, every King had a jester, whose business it was to keep His Majesty merry by pranks and witticisms. A good deal of familiarity was allowed to these men, and princes were sometimes very fond of their jesters.

A story is told of a King who in a playful moment handed a wand to his favourite, saying: "There, keep that till you find a greater fool than yourself." Time passed on, days, weeks, months. Suddenly, one day an alarm was spread abroad that the King was very ill. He got worse and worse, and at last the physicians gave him up, and it was broken to him that he was going to die. Seeing his jester among the attendants in the sick-room, he summoned him to his bedside, and said:

"I am going to leave you."

"Indeed, your Majesty, how is that?"

"I am going on a journey."

"A short one probably."

"No, I am going a long way off."

"But your Majesty will return?"

"I shall never return."

"Then you will have made all preparations no doubt, and everything will be in readiness for you when you reach that distant land?"

"I have made no preparations, I am not ready."

"What! going on a journey from which there

is no return, and nothing sent before you, nothing ready! Allow me to give back to you the wand I had from your Majesty's hand; I have found a greater fool than myself."

Not so long ago a lady, who had lived a wicked life, was persuaded to attend a mission that was being given in her neighbourhood. The mission lasted several weeks, and the lady followed it up to the last day. She did not appear at breakfast that morning. After waiting some time, the people of the house became alarmed and went up to her room. It was locked. They forced the door open and went in. She was dead!

On the table her diary was lying. They opened it at a date some weeks back, where there was the entry:

"I will go to confession next month."

They turned a few pages:

"I will go to confession next week."

Again they turned the page. There was the entry of the night before:

"I will go to confession to-morrow."

To-morrow never came. As she wrote the words God was saying: "Thou fool, *this night* do they require thy soul of thee."[1] The grace to repent and set her accounts right had been given a month back—and she put off. Week after week it was pleading, pressing, persuading. "Go at once," was its prompting—but she put off. The next day she would have gone, *perhaps*—but it was too late.

[1] St. Luke 12

The life which was lent her was called for again.[1] "God is not mocked." "I will come as a thief in the night." "Be ready."

Our Lord Himself tells us what He means by getting ready, and who they are who will be ready, the Wise Virgins whose lamps will be found lit, the servants who will have traded with their talents: "When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, and all the Angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right Hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right Hand: Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me. . . . Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[2] It is work done for others for His sake that will win for the Blessed that sweet invitation: "*Come!*" We must have done something for Him, some work for the corporal or spiritual good of those whom He loves.

[1] Wisdom 25. [2] St. Matt. 25.

A young lieutenant in the army, a convert, was ordered out to Africa soon after his reception into the Church. He died of sunstroke almost immediately on his arrival. But death which came so suddenly, did not find him unprepared. He seemed to have had a presentiment that his time in this world would be short, and from the hour he became a Catholic two desires took possession of his soul—to keep himself always ready for his summons, and to help others to the knowledge of the Faith which had made him so happy. One day, shortly before leaving England, he took a young lady to a friend he had in a convent, begging she might be instructed in the doctrines of the Church.

"What led you to inquire into them?" she was asked.

"I had no thought of doing so till last week, when I met Lieutenant N. at a ball. Whilst we were waltzing, he found out that I was dissatisfied with my position as an Anglican, and he tried to put before me the claims of the Catholic Church. His faith was firm as a rock, but his instructions, he said, had been so hurried and imperfect that he feared he could not help me much, so he proposed to take me to a friend of his, and here I am."

See what it is to be on the alert! Surely the young soldier, intent on his Master's service, even in a ball-room, was found watching when his summons came.

Death is terrible, then, to those who are not watching. But it is a simple and an easy thing to

those who have often thought about it and kept themselves ready. It is only like throwing themselves into their Father's Arms. Is there anything frightening in that?

Two young men spent much of their free time in collecting botanical specimens. It happened one day that in the course of a ramble through a wild bit of country, they spied a rare plant peeping out of a cleft half-way down a cliff. Of course such a prize must be secured, but how? They had a rope with them. Would it be safe for one of them to be let down by the other? Hardly, for they were neither of them what you would call feather-weights. Whilst they were discussing ways and means, a little country boy came whistling along. This solved the problem.

"I say, little chap, would you like this half-crown? See, it is quite new. We want that tuft of flowers in the cleft down there. Will you get it for us? You're a light weight, and we'll let you down with this rope."

He was a poor boy, and had never had a half-crown in his life. His eyes glistened. But the flowers were a long way down. He looked at them, he looked at the rope, and he hesitated. Suddenly his face lighted up.

"My father is close by, just in that little cottage over there. If he will hold the rope, I'll go. I'll run and ask him." The father came and held the rope, the boy was let down, got the prize, and was hauled up again in safety.

I look over the cliff into the depth below. I think of death, and am afraid. But why? I shall go over safely—for my Father holds the rope.

"Can we be sure of dying a good death if we like?"

A good death means final perseverance. This is a grace we cannot merit. Nothing we can do will give us a right to it. But God has promised it to earnest prayer. If we persevere in asking Him for this greatest of graces, He will surely give it.

"Do we know when people die well and go to Heaven?"

We can watch, and at times learn something up to the moment of death. In that moment all is decided. Before we have had time to begin our *De profundis* in the silent room, all is over. But what has passed at the Judgment-seat is hidden from us. The gate opens, the soul passes through, we see no more. We cannot catch the first look which meets it on the other side. We cannot hear that first word on which its eternity depends. But though we cannot know, we can guess a good deal. There are many signs going before on which to rest our hopes and fears. Just as the church bells and the preparations in the sanctuary tell whether it is a mourning or a bridal party that is expected, so the sights and sounds around the death-bed are often tell-tales, heralds of what is to come.

Eternity depends on the way in which our life here ends, and the last days or hours of life are

generally a reflection of what the rest has been. We say generally, because sometimes one who has led a wicked life gets the grace of conversion at the end. But as a rule death is the echo of life; as a man lives, so he dies. And thus the last hours of life are like a mirror reflecting two ways, showing what has been and what is likely to be.

A lady who was dying turned to her confessor and said: "The school children—are coming—for —their treat—this afternoon—will you go—into—the garden—and shake—the apple-trees—for them?" Did this tell any tale of what her life had been?

"I should think everybody turns good when they know they're going to die."

Priests and nurses tell us this knowledge does not make the difference we might expect. And the *Imitation* says, "Few are improved by sickness."

We are too weak to make great changes when every effort costs. Our character, our habits, the little ways by which those about us know us, all these come out strongly in our last sickness. Pain and weariness try our patience sorely, and then appears the training we have given ourselves in life. If we have accustomed ourselves to bear little aches and troubles bravely, we shall be brave in the grievous pain we may have to suffer then. But if we never deny our bodies now, if we indulge ourselves in every whim, and break out into angry, impatient words when we have anything to suffer, the probability is we shall be worse still in our last illness. We shall shock and pain all who are about us, and give the devil a dangerous advantage when

he comes down "with great wrath, knowing he hath but a short time."[1] If we have not learned to pray whilst we were well—*to pray*, mind, not merely to kneel down and gabble over prayers—prayer will not come easily to us when we shall need it so much. But if we have taught ourselves to love our beads and our crucifix and holy water, to turn often to our good Angel and our Patron Saint, to cling to our Lady, to trust in the Sacred Heart; if we have made our confessions carefully, and been always earnest in our sorrow; if our Communions have been regular, and we have done what we could in the way of preparation; then we have laid up a rich store of help and comfort for that last hour when we shall need all the comfort that the crucifix and the prayers of the Church can give, all that the presence of our good Angel and our Lord and His Blessed Mother can bring. Then we shall be able to say with a great servant of God, "I did not think it was so sweet to die."

St. Francis de Geronimo was taken one day to the infirmary of the Jesuit Novitiate in Naples to visit a sick novice. The young man had been very ill, but the worst seemed to be over, and it was believed he would recover. The Novice-master, however, who had built great hopes on his novice, was anxious to have the Saint's opinion on the case, for the secrets of the sick-room were often made known to him. The result of the sickness he knew the state of the soul, the fate that awaited it in eternity.

[1] Apoc. 12.

It was like bringing the sunshine into a place to bring St. Francis there; brightness and peace seemed to go out from him and gladden all around. He stayed awhile with the young Brother, cheered him with holy, happy words, and left him full of joy and confidence. But on leaving the house, he turned to the Master of Novices, and said gently: "It is no use, my dear Father, to try to keep Tarsia here on earth—our Lady wants him." And so it turned out. A few hours later a change for the worse set in, and Tarsia passed away, gazing lovingly to the last on a picture of Mary, and whispering softly to the Father who knelt beside him, "Our Lady wants me."

Why should not I too live on such terms with our dear Mother that she may look upon me as her own property and possession? So that when my time has come, and my soul passes out of this world into the next, it may be because I am sent for from Home—our Lady wants me.

Turn from this death-bed in the novitiate at Naples to another in a royal chamber of the palace at Richmond. Another—no, we cannot say that, for at Richmond it is not a death-bed. The aged Queen who is dying in her palace, sits propped up with pillows on the floor, and obstinately refuses to go to bed. Seventy years of life, forty-five of earthly grandeur are gone. The great change is at hand. She knows that she must die, and the thought fills her with terror. She has cast about this way and that for means to prolong the life that is ebbing



DEATH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

To face p. 248.

fast. A piece of witch-gold lies near her; a playing-card has been nailed to her chair.

But now all hope is gone. Four-and-twenty hours has she sat there motionless on the floor, her eyes fixed vacantly on the ground, her finger on her lip. Terrible visions affright her. A while ago she whispered to Lady Scrope that "her own figure, exceeding lean and fearful, appeared to her one night in a light of fire." Scared and helpless, her attendants stand around, or in the far corners of the room speak together in whispers. Her fierce looks and words have long ago hushed them all into silence, and not one dares to offer help or comfort. What comfort, indeed, should they bring! Preparation for death she will not hear of. She has deprived millions of the help so sorely needed at the last, and help is far from her now. She has scoffed at the sacraments of the dying, and shut off from trembling sinners the saving streams of the Precious Blood. And now in her hour of supreme need she is an outcast from the Church of God. His priests she has hunted to death, and there is none by her side now to speak of mercy and of hope.

At last the Lord Admiral persuades her to be carried to her couch. The end is close at hand; five minutes more, and Elizabeth's life will be a thing of the past. Her Ministers and attendants are making arrangements for her funeral and the proclamation of her successor. Sir Robert Carey, booted and spurred, sits watching the light in a certain window of the palace. At two o'clock the light is put out. This is the signal. At the palace

gates stands his horse ready saddled. He gallops off to ride day and night till he reaches Edinburgh, to bend his knee to the King of Scots.

On the Feast of the Annunciation, 1586, Margaret Clitheroe joined the English Martyrs before the throne of God. Seventeen years later, on the eve of the feast, Elizabeth of England went to her account—"*the soul that was lent her was called for again.*"[1]

Even those who have not led bad lives feel friendless in the awful hour of death, if they have not cared to secure for themselves friends in need!

An old man of eighty was dying. He sat propped up with pillows in his bed, his eyes closed, his breath coming short and fast. One thin hand lay stretched upon the coverlet, the other held fast the hand of his little grandchild who stood by his side, repeating the short prayers we are told to say by the dying: "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I die in peace in your blessed company."

When she stopped, the old man opened his eyes and looking at her wistfully, said,

"Ah, Bonnie, if only I had learned some of them prayers when I was young—they don't come easy *now*."

[1] Wisdom 25.

You see we have to die sooner or later, "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*" But we need not have this terrible wrench all at once. To die means to leave everything in this world and go to God. Those who will leave nothing, not even sin till they are obliged, prepare a terrible struggle for their death-bed. But those who try to keep clear of sin, who say, "*Hands off:*" "*Thou shalt not,*" when a forbidden pleasure tempts them, and say this sometimes when they are not obliged, that so they may keep themselves well in hand—such as these have no wrench when death comes, for they have done all the hard work before like St. Paul who said, "*we die daily.*"

So though we cannot see behind the veil, we can gather a great deal from that time of waiting when the soul is expecting its summons.

If there is one thing that our Lord wants us to understand, it is this—that those who love and serve Him have nothing to fear, either from wicked men, or from devils, or from their own weakness, from pain or from danger, no, nor from death itself, because He will take care of them. The Holy Scriptures are full of His loving promises to His servants: "*Fear not, Abram, for I am thy protector.*"[1] "*Peace be to you, Tobias, fear not.*"[2] "*Fear not, Zachary.*" "*Fear not, Mary.*"[3] "*Fear not,*" said the Angel to the Shepherds: "*Fear not,*" to the holy women at the Sepulchre.

And our Lord's words to His own are again and

[1] Genesis 15.
[2] Tobias 12. [3] St. Luke 1.

again: "*Fear not. Fear not, only believe.*"[1] "*Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows.*"[2] "*Fear not, little flock.*"[3] "*It is I, be not afraid.*"[4] "*And the Lord said to Paul: Fear not.*"[5]

See how anxious He is to cure our fears. He knows that those who are His must suffer many things, but it seems as if He could not bear them to suffer from fear. "*Peace be to you,*" was His usual salutation to His friends after the Resurrection. Even before His Passion, on the night of His Last Supper, when He told the Twelve that He was going to leave them, and that they should have distress and be made sorrowful and be hated by the world, even then He said to them: "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. . . Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid.*"[6]

Fear is a very terrible pain, it was one of the greatest our Lord had to bear. St. Mark tells us that in the Garden of the Agony where He began His Sacred Passion, "*He began to fear*" and to be heavy. He was frightened at the sight of the torments that were coming, and prayed the Chalice might pass from Him. So He knows what it is to be afraid and He can pity us in our fears.

There are few of us who have not felt this pain. Some children, through the fault of silly nurses, suffer from it cruelly. Perhaps we ourselves are among those who cannot bear to be left alone in the dark. We know it is silly, the darkness does not hide anything that will hurt us, there is nothing

[1] St. Matt. 5. [2] St. Matt. 10. [3] St. Luke 12.
[4] St. John 6. [5] Acts 18. [6] St. John 14

to be afraid of. But there it is, we *are* afraid, and it takes a great deal of courage to conquer this foolish fear. Of course if we could get one of our brothers to go down the dark lane with us, it would make all the difference, but we are afraid to go alone.

Something like this is the fear that even good people have of death. It is the loneliness of that dark road that frightens them so. What does our Elder Brother do then? He promises to take us through Himself, to be at our side in that hour when no one of this earth shall stand by us. He has been through the dark valley and reached the bright land beyond, and now He comes back for us. "*I am thy Brother, fear not.*"[1] If we cling to Him in life, try to please Him, hate sin which alone makes death terrible, listen to His warning words, "*Watch! Be ready!*" then when we lie down to die, He will come Himself to be our Viaticum, the Food for our journey: *I will come and take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be.*[2] He will throw His Arm round us and lead us safe through the short dark passage to the place He has prepared for us in His Kingdom: *And so shall we be always with the Lord.*[3]

"It's rather a pity, isn't it, that we can't practise dying? I mean that we can only die once. Because, you know, if we could practise and didn't do it right the first time, we could try again."

But we *can* practise, not indeed the act of dying, but the acts we must make in order to die well.

[1] Esther 15. [2] St. John 14. [3] 1 Thess. 4.

Those who kneel round us then will suggest these to us—acts of *faith* in all that God has revealed and the Church teaches; of *hope* of Heaven, in spite of all our sins; of *love* of God, Who has loved us so dearly and is going to take us Home; acts of *sorrow*, that we have ever offended God, Who has always been so good to us, Who is so good in Himself; of *patience* in our pains, as we look at the crucifix and see what Jesus bore for us, hanging upon His cruel death-bed there; of *trust*, that He Who died for us will forgive us all our sins, and keep us safe in His Sacred Heart, and smile on us when we see His Face, and open His Arms and say to us, *Come!* These are the acts we shall have to try to make then. It will not be easy as it is now whilst we are well and strong, for we shall be very weak and perhaps in great pain. But if we have followed your excellent advice and practised well beforehand, they will be much easier. Nay, it may be that through the good habit we have formed, these acts will come to our mind easily, and so we shall be paid back richly for the trouble we have taken in the past.

Of course we shall ask our friends in Heaven—our Patrons, and favourite Saints, and the holy Angels, to come and help us in that hour when we shall need help so much. We must *ask* them mind. People do not go where they are not invited, it is rude. But what a joy it will be to see them all trooping in, saying, "We are come by invitation"—Holy Mary, Mother of God, taking up her post of course close to our pillow, to pray for us and protect

us at the hour of our death; St. Joseph, the Patron of the dying, to assist us in our last agony; St. Michael, to defend us in the day of battle; the Saints we have loved in life to prove themselves friends in need. And close to us, watching every movement, warding off every temptation, comforting, strengthening, praying as he never prayed for us before, our faithful Guardian Angel. Then after our Viaticum, our Lord Himself! Oh, how sweet it will be to die in such safe keeping as this! "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I die in peace in your blessed company."

A word about contrition.

It is most necessary to learn, whilst we are well, how to make acts of perfect contrition, and to have the habit of making such acts often, because, should death come suddenly, or when no priest is at hand, an act of perfect contrition will obtain forgiveness even of mortal sin. But remember this—to be able to make an act of contrition quickly, in a sudden accident on a railway, in a boat, on my bicycle, I must have practised it often. Who would dream of sitting down to play Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata without having practised it? And no one need dream of being able to make an act of perfect contrition at the hour of death who has not often and often tried to make it well during life. In a fire no one thinks he is going to die. He must escape, he must find the door, he must save his life at any cost. This is his one thought. The idea of giving himself up for lost and preparing for death

never strikes him till all hope is gone, and then it is too late. Terror takes possession of the soul; how will the thought of making an act of sorrow for its sins from the pure love of God even occur to it, *unless* such an act has been often made in life and become as it were a habit? We must get this most blessed habit *now*.

So far, then, from saying we cannot practise, this is just what we can and shall do if we are wise. There are hundreds and thousands practising it, and they have been practising for years. As regularly as the first Friday of the month comes round, they make their preparation for death.

"But doesn't this make them very miserable?"

Quite the contrary. Such as these you may be sure are our Lord's faithful servants, for they are *watching*. They love Him and are at peace with Him. There is nothing on their conscience that troubles them. They are living their lives for Him, trying to please Him and do His Will, and are ready to go to Him when He calls. The thought of that call, so far from frightening them or making them miserable, fills them with a holy joy.

"How do you feel to-day?" said a faithful friend as he took his seat by Cardinal Wiseman's death-bed.

"Like a boy going home for the holidays," was the answer, and a smile lit up the poor, suffering face.

Why should we not be wise and prepare like this? have a fixed time each month for preparation;

make our confession as if it were to be our last—no fear then of having anything to trouble us when the last comes; make our Communion as if it were our Viaticum, as if for the last time we were receiving our Lord beneath the veil, and were trusting ourselves to His Arms to be taken safely through the gate of death and set down with joy before His Unveiled Face; go over, as if we were lying on our death-bed, the prayers of the Church when she brings to us the last of her treasures, the sacraments of the dying. Oh, how much those lose who hear these beautiful prayers for the first time when their ears are getting dulled to all the sounds of earth! But what comfort they bring to those who can follow them, who know them well and are expecting them! The eyes close for the holy anointing, the thin hands stretch themselves out, the lips move in union with the priest. Is not this a sign of what is surely coming? Are not these the blessed servants who will be found watching?

Some of us get the idea that the saints hate themselves, that they are unnatural, incomprehensible people, always trying to make themselves uncomfortable and miserable. Now, as it happens, they are quite the opposite of all this. They love themselves far better than we do. No one observing our preparations for a few hours' journey by train—the corner seats and foot-warmers and luncheon baskets secured, the wraps and rugs and latest papers bundled after us into the carriage, will accuse us of carelessness in neglecting precautions or providing ourselves with needful comforts. Yet

how many of us make any preparation, take any precautions, provide any comforts for that last journey when we shall be in such sore need?

The saints, and many who are a long way from being saints, are wiser than this. They are ready to take a little trouble now to secure for themselves eternal rest. They willingly deny themselves this and that to provide comfort for their last hours. Is this unnatural, incomprehensible?

We have thought of our friends kneeling at our bedside and suggesting the acts we shall have to make. But unless our last sickness is very short, there will be hours when we shall lie quite alone, or all but alone, through the long nights perhaps, with no one but the silent watcher over there who thinks we are asleep. Asleep! Oh, no, for though our eyes are closed we never saw so clearly. Stretched out before us lies our past life from the time we were children. How fast it has all gone! How different it looks now! We see many ups and downs in it, but only one thing that troubles us now —sin; only one thing that makes us happy—what we have done to please our Lord. As children were we stubborn, disobedient, resentful when corrected? Did we pain good parents; did we, by bad example, harm those who were more innocent than we were? Have we spent our lives in trying to please ourselves? Or have we done something for God and for others?

Oh, children, let us so live as to store up happy memories for that time when we shall be looking back upon the life that is past.

We have something more to do than simply to squeeze into Heaven. Our life must not be such that when it is over all that can be said about it will be—well, it *has been forgiven*. We want to give our Lord what He is looking forward to, the joy of *rewarding*. How can He smile upon us when we appear before Him unless we give Him something to smile at?

"There is just one thing more I want to say, only it sounds silly. I know, of course, we shan't *feel* being in the coffin and in the grave. But I can't help being frightened all the same. It seems so dreadful to be there, all by ourselves, in the dark and the cold till the end of the world."

Dreadful, indeed, it would be if we *were* there, but *we* shall be far away. What will lie there in the dark and the cold will not be ourselves but our "remains," the case out of which we shall have crept, like the butterfly, to mount up into the sky. Has the bright, beautiful thing any pity to waste upon the dusky sheath it has left behind?

No, *we* shall not lie there in the lonely grave. We, please God, shall be safe in Purgatory, suffering, indeed, suffering intensely, but with Heaven secured to us, Heaven in sight. Sin must be punished, if not here, then hereafter. The accomplices in sin, body and soul, must both be punished. The soul, which was most in fault, must do penance in dreadful pain till its debt is paid. The body must do its share by returning to the dust from which it came. This separation of body and soul was not part of God's

first plan for us. It is the punishment of sin, *His* punishment, and therefore terrible. No wonder, then, that we are afraid of Death and look upon it as an enemy. God Himself calls it "the enemy Death." But this enemy is to be destroyed at last. When body and soul have both satisfied the justice of God and the time for reward has come, the Archangel's trumpet shall sound and the graves shall give up their dead. What a day of unspeakable joy that will be for those who have loved our Lord! The very body that has seemed so utterly destroyed will be given back to them.

"Will it be the very same?"

The very same, but perfected and glorified, made like to the Body of our Lord. *Death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more. God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.*[1] He will give us *salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us.*[2] *And the enemy Death shall be destroyed last.*[3] "For the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven . . . with the voice of an Archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ in the air."[4]

As He stands there in the clouds, surrounded by all His elect, looking down with them into earth's untenanted graves, the cry of triumph from His lips will be taken up by them all, from holy Abel to

[1] Apoc. 21.
[2] St. Luke 1. [3] 1 Cor. 15. [4] 1 Thess. 4.

the last whom Death has struck: "*O Death where is thy victory! O Death where is thy sting!*"[1]

When, then, the thought of the grave comes to sadden and frighten us, let us look up to Heaven and say: *I know that in the last day I shall rise out of the earth and I shall be clothed again with my skin and in my flesh I shall see my God, Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold and not another.*[2] *I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.*

[1] 1 Cor. 15. [2] Job 19.

XIII.

"*WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD.*"

He sent from on high and took me, and drew me out of many waters. (2 Kings 22, 17.)

If you look at a map of the north Polar regions, or, better still, at a globe, you will see lying round the Pole that vast expanse of frozen water which is called the Arctic Ocean. This ocean is bounded almost all round by the northern shores of Europe, Asia, and America. But between Spitzbergen and Greenland on one side of the Pole, and Siberia and Behring's Strait on the other, there is a water-way by which three oceans, the Arctic, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, are united.

Now for three centuries men have wondered if it would be possible to reach Eastern Asia from Europe by sailing right across the Polar Sea. A little measurement will show you that such a route would be more direct than the one now followed. The shortest way from England to China would be, not south and south-east through the Mediterranean and Red Sea into the Indian Ocean, but north and north-west, past Iceland, across the North Pole, and out through Behring's Strait into the Pacific.

"What a queer way! But can we get across the Pole so?"

Ah, that is just the question men have tried to answer. They have tried hard. Over and over again expeditions have been sent out from different countries to explore the Polar Sea. The English have made between fifty and sixty attempts to creep round it along the shores of North America. The Russians have tried to creep round by the East along the northern shores of Siberia. Americans, Germans, Swedes, have all had their share in the work of exploration, and a Norwegian has proved that a ship may be carried by a current right across the Polar Seas. In his voyage of discovery, this bold adventurer got nearer to the Pole than any previous explorer.

All these voyages were full of peril. The ice closes round the ship that ventures into those Arctic waters, and catches her as in a trap:

> On the frozen deep's repose,
> 'Tis a dark and dreadful hour
> When round the ships the ice-fields close
> And the northern night-clouds lour.[1]

If she manages to break loose and free herself from one trap, she is caught in another, caught at last never to escape again. So ship after ship with its brave crew has perished. So the *Jeannette* perished, caught and crushed by ice off the New Siberian islands, in 1881.

The fate of this unfortunate vessel made most men abandon all hopes of finding a way across the

[1] Mrs. Hemans.

Polar Sea. The thing was impossible, they said, and it would be wrong to lose any more lives in making the attempt.

But there are some who never despair. They cannot understand what the word *impossible* means. Their resolution rises with difficulties, and they find motives for hope in the very things that crush the hopes of others. The loss of the *Jeannette* brought out courage of this sort. Articles which must have come from the wreck had drifted over to Greenland between the fields of frozen ice. Where they had passed, a ship perhaps might pass, if she could be made strong enough to withstand the tremendous pressure of the ice-floes.

So at least thought Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian explorer, and his own experience confirmed him in this idea.

In the year 1888, he travelled on foot right across Greenland, that huge island, more than six times the size of the United Kingdom. On the east coast he found bits of fir and Siberian larch that could hardly have come from any place but Siberia. There must then be a current flowing from the Siberian Arctic Sea to the eastern coast of Greenland. Why should not that current carry a ship and its crew? For five years he turned this thought over in his mind. He considered the risk of such an enterprise, he counted the cost, and he determined to make the attempt.

He had a ship built specially for this hazardous voyage, and furnished with all that was necessary for a journey of three or four years across the Polar

regions. It cost an enormous sum to provide her with all she required—coal, machinery, ammunition, sledges, and kayaks for travelling over the ice-fields, or between them, dogs, and provisions for five years for dogs and men. But the Norwegian Government was generous, and provided willingly all that was needed.

"How many dogs were there?"

Thirty-four, splendid fellows with long bushy tails curling over their backs.

Well, at last all was ready, and on June 24, 1895, the *Fram* set sail from Christiania Fjord, Norway. Nansen stood on the deck watching the receding shore. Wise heads were there condemning his folly, and loving hearts sorrowing already over his fate. But he was not disturbed. Better than any man he knew the dangers that were awaiting his ship, and the tremendous responsibility he was taking upon himself. But nothing could shake his faith or his resolution. His mind was calm, and his heart full of hope. Why? Because he knew he had grounds, not for hope only, but for confidence. His trust was in the builder of his ship. On her build and her fittings all, or almost all, would depend. So he had secured the services of a well-known Norwegian naval architect, who threw himself heartily into the project, and gave to the work entrusted to him all the skill he possessed. She must be a ship of enormous strength and of picked material, to be able to bear the pressure of the ice, and the peculiar trials she would have to face. She must be so shaped that the ice should be

made to raise, instead of nipping and crushing her. She must be ready to endure patiently as well as to fight bravely her terrible enemy, which, during the whole of her course, would do its best to destroy her.

Plainly it was no ordinary ship that was wanted. Much would be expected of her. But, on the other hand, a glorious work was confided to her. So he built her with the utmost care, and with her special needs always present to his mind. By ingenious devices the points that would be specially exposed were specially protected, and the powerful electric light at her bow would warn her of perils ahead. Provided therefore the commander and the crew did their part, the builder felt certain that the *Fram* would be equal to the task imposed upon her.

"Oh, I hope she was; I hope she did not disappoint him after all his trouble!"

No, she did not disappoint him. Stopped at times by densely-packed ice, at other times fast frozen in masses thirty feet in thickness, obliged to turn back here, almost run aground there, suddenly checked by contrary winds just when the road seemed open—still she held on her way. At times the outlook was dreary in the extreme, everything seemed to be going against her; but still, through the dreariness and the difficulties and the disappointments, slowly but surely she held on her way. It was all she could do to withstand the tremendous ice-pressure of those Polar Seas in the Arctic winter, and there were days and nights when scarcely a man on board thought she could hold out.

Sometimes the ice would pile itself up, and crash against her sides with a noise like thunder. At other times it would lift her eight or nine feet, and let her drop again. But her builder had prepared her for this, and there was no sound or sign of her timbers yielding.

"The *Fram* behaved beautifully, as I expected she would," wrote Nansen. "On pushed the ice with steady pressure, but down under us it had to go, and we were slowly lifted up. The squeezings were sometimes so strong that the *Fram* was lifted several feet; but then the ice could no longer bear her, and she broke it below her."

These "squeezings" must have been decidedly uncomfortable and inconvenient, but the crew, who were at first frightened, got used to the ups and downs and the bumpings, and felt as safe in their good ship as in a fortress.

Her course, on account of so many obstacles, was not a straight line, you may be sure. She drifted backwards and forwards, losing here what she had gained there, and, as Lieutenant Hansen afterwards said, her line of route, if marked on a map, would be such a confusion of knots and loops, that no one would be able to make anything of it. But the work was going forward all the time in spite of difficulties, and on Christmas Day, 1895, she reached the most northerly latitude till then attained. Help always came just when it was needed. At the moment when the pressure was at its height, and her timbers and beams began to creak, she was lifted slowly out of her icy prison.

And at last, after forcing her way southward for a month, through one hundred and fifty miles of densely packed ice, she came triumphantly out of it into the free waters, and was welcomed home with the honour she deserved.

There! I have done what I never thought I should do—got safely to the end of my story without being stopped. I expected to be found out almost as soon as I started, and to have had explorers coming fast after me all bent on a voyage of discovery. But you are growing tired I see, or lazy.

"Oh, we didn't know we had to guess things. And we were thinking so about the *Fram* and whether she would be crushed by the ice before she got home, that we forgot to think about anything else."

Well then think away now. Guess all of you who the *Fram* can be, and try to find out all about her.

"*I* expect she is the Church, and the Builder will be God, Who made her so strong that she does not get smashed when storms come and persecutions and things."

Some one over there does not agree with you, I see.

"I don't think the *Fram* can be the Church. Didn't you say she made mistakes sometimes? Did she go wrong ever, I mean quite wrong and out of her way?"

Quite wrong and out of her way times without number, and had to go back on her track and try again.

"Then she couldn't be the Church. I knew she wasn't."

"Oh, I know now. It's our own soul of course! and the ice that nearly smashed the *Fram* will be temptation, and she was lifted up out of it just in time, like we are when we pray."

"And I have found out something else. The *Fram* cost ever so much money because she had to have such a lot of things for the voyage. And the Government gave it willingly. And our souls cost the Blood of our Lord, and He gave it willingly too."

"I shouldn't wonder if the light on board the *Fram*, that kept her safe, was our conscience, or the Holy Ghost."

"Oh, and are our good Angels the sledge-dogs? I do hope they are; they pull us on you know when we can't get on by ourselves."

Well, yes, perhaps they are, if they don't mind. In one respect I am afraid they are like the dogs, though not *quite* like of course. Nansen says in his diary:

"Poor animals, they had a bad time of it! Faithful and enduring they followed us, some of them, the whole journey through. Faithfully they worked for us, good tempered and willing to the end. When I think of all those splendid animals, toiling for us without a murmur as long as they could strain a muscle, and never getting any thanks or even so much as a kind word, until the time came when they could do no more—I have moments of bitter self-reproach."

"The horrid, unkind man! How could he be so ungrateful as to treat the faithful creatures like that!"

And what about our poor Guardian Angels, "toiling for us without a murmur, rarely getting any thanks or even so much as a kind word"?

You have waked up at last, but you have not completed your discoveries by any means. What about a map of the *Fram's* voyage being a confusion of knots and loops which only the commander on board could understand? Can any of you make anything of this? No? Well, it is too hard and I ought not to have asked.

"Oh, wait a minute, I think I know. Does it mean that if we could see our lives they would look so confused, such backwards and forwards work and so many mistakes, that no one would think we were getting on at all. But God knows we are, just because we are trying, and He will bring us safe into Behring's Strait, I mean safe to Heaven at the end."

Very good indeed. And remember, it could not have been an easy voyage by any means, though the ship was so well provided with all things needful, that the crew made light of their difficulties. How could it have been easy? Cold and pain and discomfort there certainly was, and plenty of hard work. Often and often they had to saw through the ice foot by foot in order to free the *Fram* from its clutches. Oh, that ice! Week after week, and month after month the same dreary prospect! floes stretching round them on every side, and so far that they could not see beyond them even with telescopes.

There was danger too. More than once the ice piled itself up in huge masses high above the rigging, threatening if not to crush the ship at least to bury her. When things were as bad as this, the only way to free her was by blowing up the ice with gunpowder. The explosion was like thunder! Then amid the cheers of the crew she glided again into the water.

No, the course of the *Fram* was not a smooth one. But her crew were a brave set. They faced their difficulties not only manfully but cheerfully, for they looked to the reward in store for them when they got home. They cared for one another, shared together anxiety, hardships, and labour, doing their appointed duty each and all, commander, officers, and men.

"Just like our memory and understanding and will, that have to manage our ship, isn't it?"

Yes. But now I have got this difficulty. How could there be such brightness on board the *Fram* when there was so much to be borne, so much knocking about, and hunger and cold, and when they did not know if they would get safe home in the end? How could they be so full of hope and look forward so joyously to the reward?

"Was it because her builder knew the things that would happen to her, and that she would be knocked about, and saw she could bear it, and they trusted him?"

Yes it was this, and we must all take a lesson from that brave ship. We wonder sometimes how the martyrs *could* have borne all they had to bear—

how women and little frightened children could have been so brave. And then we remind ourselves that they were God's servants, and He stood by them and made them strong. He knew all that was coming; He knew the strength and the weakness of each one, and He took care there should not be more pain than each could bear with the help of His grace. So of course they got through, we say.

But what about ourselves. Why should not we have the same trust in God?

"Oh, but we are not martyrs!"

No, but we have martyrs' work to do—to get to Heaven through such troubles as God allows to come in our way. We are each and all His servants, no less than the martyrs. He will stand by us as He stood by them. Each soul is the work of His Hands, a precious vessel, "whose Builder and Maker is God." He knows the storms and the difficulties through which each will have to pass, and the strength that He will give in every trial. So we may be bright and joyous like the brave crew of the *Fram*.

A favourite word of the devil's is "*Suppose*."

"*Suppose* you don't pass this examination after trying so hard."

"*Suppose* you have to stay at school during the holidays."

"*Suppose* your father or mother were to die—both of them—*both at once!*"

"*Suppose* you were not to save your soul after all."

He starts a whole litany of "*Supposes*" and expects us to answer:

"Oh, I could never bear that!"

"Oh, how miserable I should be!"

"Oh, it's no use trying then!" and so on.

Now instead of going through his litany with him like this, and getting thoroughly upset and miserable, what ought we to do when he comes to us with his "*Supposes*"? Don't answer him at all, perhaps that is best. But if you do answer, say to him, "Well, *suppose:* what then? These things may happen, or they may not, and I am not going to be so silly as to make myself unhappy about them. The *Imitation* says, 'it is a vain and unprofitable thing to trouble ourselves about future events which perhaps may never happen.'"

"But they *might* happen," he says.

"It they do, God will take care of me. So *suppose* you go back to where you came from."

To please an absent brother a girl once kept a journal of the little daily events of an uneventful life in a country home in France. Everything that happened, everything she saw or heard around her went down in her copy-books—church services, the sunshine, crickets, the birds bathing, a visitor, nothing was too tiny or too homely to interest Maurice.

One evening when she had to go to bed with a bad cold, she has the following entry:

"*Feb.* 17, 1838.
At night, with my feet in a foot-bath.

In this uncomfortably hot water, I am thinking of the martyrs; of what those baths of pitch, oil, and boiling water, into which they were plunged, must have been. How could they bear such terrible torture? Had they really the same nature that we have? It is hard to believe it when we feel so acutely the least touch of pain—a spark, a drop of water; when we cry out and draw back as I have just been doing. Blandina's torments, how frightful they were! Suppose anything so dreadful were to happen *to me*, what should I do?—Why, as she did to be sure, for God Who gave her grace would give it to me."

Eugénie de Guérin was right. The martyrs were strong, not in their own strength, but in God's. They had the grace they needed for their time of trial, the grace to confess Christ in the midst of torments. What did she in her hot water want with such a grace? God does not waste His treasures. He gives grace when it is needed, not before. He will give us every grace we want *when the time comes*. Do we want it sooner?

What can I do but trust Thee, Lord,
For Thou art God alone.
My soul is safer in Thy hands,
Father, than in my own.

Our Heavenly Father, always at hand to help us, measuring our strength, backing us up, coming

to the rescue here, preparing a happy surprise there, warding off troubles that would be too heavy for us, caring for us *always, always*—this is the thought that should keep up our hearts when things go wrong with us.

The father of a large family who saw a great trouble about to fall upon him, went to Dr. Grant for advice and sympathy. But instead of the comfort he looked for, an expression of blank dismay seemed to have settled on the face usually so peaceful.

"Indeed!" said the Bishop, "I had not heard the news."

The other was puzzled.

"I had not heard the *sad* news."

"What news, my Lord?"

"That we had lost our good Father in Heaven."

Completely bewildered, the poor man looked up inquiringly. There was a quiet, half-reproachful smile on the holy Bishop's face. He said no more, but those words, with the smile that interpreted them, did their work and carried strength and comfort to the poor troubled heart. If God Almighty was still at hand to help, why lose heart as if all hope were gone! The Bishop's smile was met by another, and with a lightened heart, lifted up in trust to our Father Who is in Heaven, the anxious father went his way.

What was it that carried the *Fram* on through all the ice-floes and brought her safely home?

"The current, I suppose."

Yes, when Nansen reached the New Siberian islands, he found, as he had expected, that a current flows right across the sea round the North Pole, from the Siberian and Behring's Strait side to the sea between Spitzbergen and Greenland. As long as the *Fram* sailed with this current all went well with her. Things began to go badly when the ice piled itself round her and stopped her course. This was the greatest danger of the voyage. Not hunger, nor cold, nor the bears that roam over those desolate wastes in search of prey, but the ice, the ice, the cruel ice, that followed her everywhere and seemed determined to work her ruin—this was her greatest foe. Again and again it closed round her, as it had closed round the unfortunate *Jeannette*. Sawing through was out of the question, it was so thick. The only way to free her, as we have said, was to blow it up with gunpowder. This done, she floated out of her prison, and was borne on by the current as before.

The current that will bear us safely to the end of our voyage is the stream of God's graces. As long as we go with it and let it carry us forward we get on fast. But the ice-floes of discouragement are always trying to close round us and bar our way. We must free ourselves at any cost. They chill us through and through, and head and hand and heart get numbed and paralyzed. They are our chief obstacles on our way to Heaven. Not the bumping up and down of our changeable nature, though it is very uncomfortable and annoying, not even our falls,

take the strength out of us like that wretched discouragement.

Trust in God makes us bright, strong, hopeful, happy, as we have seen. Distrust or discouragement makes us dark, dismal, discontented, cross, cowardly, idle, snappish, unhappy, and a host of other things bad and ugly—all coming, as usual, from pride. We are so upset to find ourselves no better than this, falling again and again into that bad habit, when we had quite made up our minds to give it up; to find ourselves so really nasty with other people, so tiresome, *so disappointing*. Hadn't we better throw it all up?

It is the devil's advice this—to give up trying when we fall into a fault or break our resolution. If it were our Lord's advice too, there would be every excuse for our doing so. But when His advice is nothing of the kind, but the very opposite, when He tells us to turn to Him at once and He will forgive and forget, how is it we are so stupid as to listen to the devil as we do!

We cannot make up our minds that our Lord is not like us. We tire so soon, we tire of ourselves so soon, that we cannot understand how He never tires of us. We hear a master say, "I give the boy up; such a quarrelsome, wool-gathering, empty-headed, disagreeable fellow I never set eyes on. I give him up." Now our Lord never says this of *us*. He never despairs of us. Even when we lose hope ourselves, He hopes on. His patience never tires, never, never, as long as life lasts. We are change-

able like the weather-cock. He says of Himself, *I am the Lord and I change not.*

Not only does He not tire of us, but He comes to us and bids us "Cheer up," and come to Him and He will put us all right again, even if we fall seventy times a day. St. Peter meant to be extremely generous when he said: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus saith to him: "I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times." Seventy times seven means over and over and over again, as often as ever we need forgiveness.

And because He knows we are inclined to sulk after a fault, He tries to gets us out of the sulks. How provoking it is to see a child who has been naughty, frowning at us from the corner where it stands with its pinafore and its thumb in its mouth, or looking injured when we smile at it and tell it to "come and be friends again." We look just as silly as this to the Saints and Angels when our Lord says to us: "Come, child, you have been naughty, it is true, but I am not going to quarrel with you. Come back to Me, and hold up your face and let Me give you My kiss of peace once more." *And we won't;* but stand in our corner pouting, as if *we* were the injured party and could afford to be sullen. It really is too bad of us, and we wonder how He, the Almighty God, can put up with our aggravating ways. Surely we can never say that He has not shown Himself infinitely patient.

He knows that the effect of sin, and even of little faults, is to make us lose, not our temper only, but our relish of God and our desire of being near Him, and so He coaxes us after this tender fashion to get us to come to Him.

Yes; if there is one truth more than another that our Heavenly Father wants to bring home to us, it is this—His readiness to forgive us our sins. Any sins, all sins, however many, however bad. We are never to believe ourselves in disgrace with Him after we have been sorry. If only we are sorry and do what we know we have to do on our part, He has promised to forgive us. And this not once or twice only, just before First Communion, and again just before our death, but over and over again, as often as we want His forgiveness.

"It's a pity we can't blow up discouragement with gunpowder as the crew of the *Fram* did; I should love to do that."

So you can. Strong acts of loving trust in God will blow it to atoms.

"I see discouragement does us a lot of harm, but it isn't quite as bad as the ice-floes, I think. They quite smashed the *Jeannette*, you know, so that she sank. Discouragement isn't a mortal sin, so it can't sink us."

True, but those who have written of the Arctic Seas tell us that a poor ship is not ruined all at once. Little by little, almost imperceptibly, the packed ice closes round her. Grind, grind—crunch, crunch. No one notices how heavy is the pressure against her sides, no one suspects danger, when

suddenly—crash! her timbers have given way, she fills, she goes down.

Discouragement does not crush the life out of us all at once. The work goes on slowly. As long as there is courage in the soul she lives. When all the courage is crushed out of her, discouragement becomes despair. And you know to what despair will bring us.

"Oh yes, we know about Judas."

Some one on that stool over there has something on his mind, I see. Well, what is it?

"I know who the bears on the ice are. They're the devils, because they're cruel and sly."

Quite true. Why, you are a famous little explorer. Did I tell you that a bear stole on board one night and devoured two of the dogs?

"That would be a devil coming up to us softly, when he thinks we are not expecting him. I hope they killed the bear."

Nansen does not say. But please take notice where the bears are found—*on the ice*. It is their home. So it is with the devils and discouragement, they go together like ice and the polar bears. We will keep clear of both and sail on trustfully and cheerily in spite of cold and ice and contrary winds, casting all our care upon Him Who has care of us. He never failed us in the past, He won't fail us in the future.

We must not expect to be like the *Fram* in all things. If we get safely to the end of our voyage like her, we shall have done well. But as to passing our examination as she did when we get into port,

I am afraid that is out of the question Not a single crack, not a single splinter displaced could be found in her. There will be little enough in us, perhaps, that has not been displaced, and our cracks may many a time have endangered the ship. But they will have been seen to in time, for we will see to them *now;* we will rid ourselves *now* of those faults, the beginnings of evil, which put us in danger.

What cheering there was in Norway when news came that the *Fram* had been sighted far out at sea, that she was making steadily for home, and might be expected soon! How the news flew through the land! What preparations were made all along the coast to welcome and do her honour! What loud "Hurrahs!" greeted her as the brave ship steered slowly into port!

And what do you suppose the builder felt when he saw her masts in the distance, those stout Norwegian pines that he had chosen—when he saw the timbers that had been so tried—when he saw her made fast to her moorings? Were there tears in his eyes, do you think, when he, who knew her best of all and cared for her as no other could care, saw her safe at last? And not safe only, but covered with honour. She had not disappointed him.

Oh, surely, this will be a joy above all joys to us when we reach that Heavenly Shore—that we have

not disappointed Him Who made us for Himself! All along that Shore there will be joy on our account some day. The news of our nearing Home will have gone before; there will be preparations for welcoming us on every side. Close, close to the Shore, will be the waiting feet, the outstretched arms, the eager faces, the longing hearts of those who loved us here—father, mother, sister, brother, and the friend whose voice and example helped us on, to whose love we turned in every need, whose going away left life so lonely and so dark. These will be there to meet us; these will be looking out over the waters, listening for the first sounds of our drawing near.

Oh, the joy of standing by their side again! safe with them upon that Shore, where partings are never seen, *nor mourning, nor crying shall be any more, for the former things are passed away*.[1]

Can our hearts bear more than this? Is there more than this awaiting us? Yes, for He in Whom all other love is centred, is there waiting and expecting—the God Who is All in all to us, Who made us for Himself, Who loved us all through the long eternity before we had any being, Who planned for us, watched over us, bore with us through that little space which we call life, Who is going to give Himself to us as our eternal reward.

Oh, the joy above all joys that we have not disappointed Him! Will not our hearts break with that excess of gladness! To think that the Infinite God should condescend to think Himself repaid for

[1] Apoc. 21.

all we have cost Him! That our salvation and eternal happiness should be *a joy to Him!*

Does not earth seem a little place, and its troubles and difficulties things of small account when we think of Heaven! Not quite yet, but *soon* —the day after to-morrow—we shall be there. Suddenly, when we least expect it, there will rise before our eyes a new and limitless Shore. Our ears will be filled with the sound of breakers echoing as they beat on it for ever: "Eternity! Eternity!" We shall drop anchor; the perils of the way will be over; *we shall be Home at last.*

We will hold on our course steadily, then, patient with the trials that pass so soon—patient with others, patient above all with ourselves. We will keep our eyes fixed on the Haven and steer for it straight, thinking more of the joys at the end of the voyage than of the troubles of the way.

And as travellers bound for a far-off country provide themselves with all they need for the life out there, and when its shores are sighted, gather all together and put themselves in readiness to appear befittingly where they are expected, so will we be on the alert, gathering together good works, and putting all things in order, that we may be ready to land without delay.

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